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THE
LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
WALTER H. PAGE

VOL. III

CONTAINING THE LETTERS
TO WOODROW WILSON

© Paul Thompson

WALTER H. PAGE (1855-1918)
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE COURT
OF ST. JAMES'S, 1913-1918

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF WALTER H. PAGE

BY
BURTON J. HENDRICK

VOLUME III

CONTAINING THE LETTERS TO WOODROW WILSON

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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF WALTER H. PAGE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE original two volumes of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page," published in 1922, were incomplete in one important respect. They contained only a very few of the Ambassador's letters to President Wilson. Page was a careful correspondent in that his writings represented his completely reasoned views on the great events that comprised his daily life, but he was a careless one in failing to preserve the record he had so conscientiously made. Sometimes he would finish a letter at a single sitting; more frequently he would work industriously until mailing time and hurriedly thrust the product into the diplomatic bag—no eyes having seen it except his own. In preparing his biography, therefore, it was necessary to assemble the letters from many sources. With the exception of the few of which copies had been made, Page's correspondence with the President was not placed at the disposal of his biographer.

Mr. Wilson's death has removed the prohibition upon the publication of these letters. At the same time the State Department has consented to a selection from Page's war-time telegrams. These Presidential letters and telegrams—omitting, of course, those already published—form the basis of the present volume.

But Wilson and Page were correspondents long before the Ambassadorship. The two men first met in 1881, at Atlanta, Georgia; at that time Wilson was making a half-hearted attempt to start a law practice, and Page was serving his apprenticeship in journalism. It was inevitable that the two men should be drawn together, for their ideas and their enthusiasms followed similar lines. Both were Southern born; both had received their early education in Southern schools and denominational colleges—Page at Trinity and Randolph-Macon, Wilson at Davidson in North Carolina. Both men had capped this somewhat primitive instruction with a course in a more comprehensive institution—Page at Johns Hopkins, Wilson at Princeton, and afterward at Johns Hopkins. Naturally, this experience, much broader than came to most Southern boys of the period, had produced a similar effect on the mind of each. Loyal as they were to the section of their birth, deeply as they loved its people and its traditions, Page and Wilson had passed far beyond the emotions and the convictions that had caused the Civil War, and both had long become reconciled to its termination as the one that promised most for the future of their country and of mankind. The state of national feeling they had reached was finely described by Wilson a few years afterward, when he said, in an article contributed to Page's *Atlantic Monthly*, that "Lincoln is the supreme American of our history." In these early days in Atlanta both men were feeling their somewhat uncertain course toward a career, and their studies at that time followed congenial lines. These studies fell in two fields that might seem at first not to have much in common—"mere literature," as Wilson afterward expressed it, and politics. Two men who could discuss almost simultaneously Wordsworth's poetry and Bagehot's "literary theory" of the British Constitution necessarily had the basis of a lasting friendship.

In this Atlanta period Wilson was twenty-five and Page twenty-six; Page's interest in the practical and vital matters of life was probably much keener than Wilson's and it is therefore not surprising that their paths presently changed—one into a life exclusively academic, the other into the more stimulating if less contemplative world of periodical literature. The two men did not ever become intimate, yet their ways, divergent as they were, occasionally brought them together. By the time that Page had reached a position of first rank as editor, Wilson had become a magazine contributor whose offerings were always eagerly received. "I have a feeling," Page wrote in 1896, to Professor Paul Shorey, of the University of Chicago, "that the group of specially trained historical men, now just coming to maturity, will be likely to contain in it a few at least who will show the artistic faculty. For one, there is Woodrow Wilson, who has a style." Wilson was at this time forty years old, and as professor at Princeton was already established as one of the two or three leading historical writers of the country. He possessed that one supreme gift without which, in Page's view, mere erudition and philosophy counted for little—the man "had a style"; he could actually write. Impatience at the rarity of this particular gift, scorn for the innumerable pretenders who poured forth an exhaustless but uninspiring stream of articles and books, were feelings Page never attempted to conceal, and his greatest joy as editor was to discover a man or a woman who had what he regarded as almost the divine talent of expression. And one of his earliest discoveries was his old Atlanta friend, Woodrow Wilson. Many of Wilson's most telling essays thus owe their origin to Walter Page. Correspondence between the two men naturally concerned magazine contributions;

most of Page's letters have disappeared, yet the old files of the *Atlantic Monthly*, dragged from the dusty repose of thirty years, aid one in reconstructing this period of his association with Wilson. They disclose Page's interest in certain vital aspects of American life and history; they portray him also in a phase for which he long enjoyed a particular fame—as a writer cf editorial letters. Wilson himself used to say that he could never resist one of Page's written requests for a contribution. "I always found him compelling on paper," he once remarked. Page not only put his wishes in irresistible form, but he always had definite ideas about subjects—not an invariable editorial quality. Sometimes he would outline the desired article; occasionally, when his interest grew especially keen, he would himself almost write the paper in the letter asking for it!

To Woodrow Wilson

June 22, 1896.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON:

Wicked as you may be, I am sure that you are not wicked enough to deserve bombardment by me when you have gone away on purpose to escape just such things. Take assurance, for I do not come, as I have too often done, seeking an article at once. I wish only to make a request that I meant to make before you went away—viz.:

It will be greatly to your advantage and to ours if we have an *Atlantic* paper by you about the time that your book of essays[1] is published. There is one subject that I tried to formulate in the old *Forum* days which has come to me more clearly since I have had the labouring oar on the *Atlantic*—to get at, from different points of view, just what constitutes American nationality: what is a present-day justification of our national existence? This is large and vague; but the particular approach to it that I wish to call your attention to while you are abroad is this:

---

[1] "Mere Literature and Other Essays," by Woodrow Wilson, 1896.

There is a passage in Jefferson's Letters (indeed, I think that he frequently wrote about the subject) wherein he draws a strong contrast between the advantages of European residence and American citizenship. With the fervid patriotism of his time and especially of his nature, he makes the advantages and duties of citizenship in the Republic stand out in very noble lines. I recall (my Jefferson is not in my summer quarters where I write) one passage that seemed to me years ago particularly stirring. That for a starting point, or something like that.

Now, your own observations as the basis of a corresponding statement for the present. Since Jefferson's time life in the United States has become very much fuller and richer in many ways. Per contra the disadvantages (as he reckoned them) of European residence have become less: government has become more liberal almost everywhere and the individual (unless he be very low-born or very poor-born) has chances such as only noblemen had in Jefferson's day. But these changes on either side only add to the fascination of the study. Have we kept the promise of the early time to make an incomparable home for men?

Do not interpret what I write as asking for a paper during your holiday or even as a request that you consciously think of it while you are abroad; and this does not call for any reply till your return. I mean merely to say that the *Atlantic* must have a characteristic and significant paper by you in the early autumn when your book appears, and I submit this only as a suggestion. And you will, perhaps, tell me what you think of it when you come home.

A pleasant holiday!

Sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To Woodrow Wilson

November 21, 1896.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON:

With the connivance of Mr. Scudder[1] I take the liberty to remind you of two entries that we made on the engagement book of the *Atlantic Monthly* before you went abroad last summer. Although it takes two to make an engagement, and you, I believe, have never definitely given your assent, these things are so desirable and so excellent that we have been unable to look upon them in any other way than as engagements.

One request, you will recall, was that you would write an article after you came home about American residents abroad, the aim being to formulate the desirability of residence in the United States as compared with residence in Europe, but more especially to point out the obligations that American citizenship and its opportunities impose upon a citizen of the republic to live and work at home; all this tending toward the formulation of what constitutes the highest type of the American citizen.

The other request, you will remember, was akin to this —that you would make an historical statement of the growth of American national feeling, showing its stages at the several periods of our history—aiming at a statement of what constitutes American nationality.

---

[1] At this time Mr. Horace E. Scudder was titular editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, though the "labouring oar," as Page says in the previous letter, fell upon himself.

We hope that you will be able to send us these things sometime during the winter, when the pressure of your lecture engagements permits; and in order that you may be perfectly sure that we are not unmindful of you I add a third request.

We very much desire for the March *Atlantic* a review of President Cleveland's public career and an estimate of his influence as a public character. We cannot turn to men who are active in political life for such an article, because we should receive from such men either a mere catalogue of political events which they consider of importance, or a eulogy of Mr. Cleveland. Of course what we want is a piece of literature which shall interpret the effect upon our history and upon our national life of his career and of his personality. Mr. Scudder and I have talked over this subject very thoroughly, and we each, independently, reached the conclusion that in your hands the subject would receive much more satisfactory treatment than in the hands of any one else.

Concerning the other essays which we hope to receive we do not venture to set any date, but we do hope that we may look for this paper on Cleveland in time for the March number, that is to say by the middle of January, and you must not say us nay.

I do not think that the article will require much preparation in the way of research or of a review of our recent political history, because in the space of a single article you could do nothing more than sketch a large subject in outline and point out the greater events and larger tendencies.

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Page's interest in the English race had its inspiration not only in that race's achievements in statesmanship, colonization, and individual development: above all, he cherished it for its literature. Trained though he was in the classics, and indispensable as he regarded the ancients as part of a modern education, he still looked upon the great English writers and the English language as more important. The following letter, written to Wilson in 1897, sufficiently indicates that his interest in England was no quickly acquired emotion of his Ambassadorship, but that it was a life-long conviction and rested upon the deepest and most substantial foundation.

To Woodrow Wilson

March 10, 1897.

DEAR MR. WILSON:

In some quiet half hour when you have nothing better to do, will you not send me a little paper for "Men and Letters" in the *Atlantic?* The short articles (from 1,000 to 2,000 words) that we group under this general heading are really signed editorials on literary subjects. Any subject, therefore, that has to do with literature comes within the range of this little "Department"—to give it a big name—for example:

How comes it that although there are multitudes of special students of history in the United States who know more facts and have a wider range of information than any great historical writer in the world had down to twenty-five years ago, the amount of historical writing (properly so-called) is really very small, and most of it so dull as to be almost unreadable?

Again:

The forgotten necessity that a man who proposes to write anything worth while should steep himself in the great English literature in order to have the genius of the race as a basis of his style and a corrective of his thought.

No foreign literature, not even the classics, will answer quite the same purpose. If a man do not have his own race behind him he will not write truly for his race; he cannot say a lasting word nor take hold on a permanent tendency.

These subjects happen to come into my mind at the moment. You may not care for either of them. I mention them only to show the kind of subjects that I hope to have taken up in "Men and Letters."

I am hoping for your article on the Growth of American National Feeling for the July number (copy by the middle of May), although I remember that your promise to have it ready was conditional.

In October the *Atlantic Monthly* will be forty years old, and we wish to celebrate that anniversary with a number that will be noteworthy. I am now making engagements for it with some of our best writers. We reckon on an article by you for that—may we not? You shall be in most excellent company; and we need your help.

All sorts of pleasant things come to us about your article on Cleveland.

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Wilson wrote two articles on Walter Bagehot for the *Atlantic* under Page's editorship. Bagehot was evidently one of Wilson's favourites at this time, for his name constantly occurs in other of his writings. Page's request in the following letter was therefore not unnatural.

To Woodrow Wilson

June 8, 1898.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON:

I take the liberty to trouble you to give me your opinion, if you will, whether an edition of Bagehot would, as you look at it, be a practicable publishing enterprise. I have said nothing about it officially to our people here, but the subject has been coming up at times to my mind. My recollection is that no edition of him has ever been published in the United States except the edition that was put forth some years ago by an insurance company in Hartford,[1] and I do not know that this was ever put upon the market or whether it was merely a sort of private enterprise. How much is Bagehot read or likely to be read in future, and how large a part of him may fairly be considered live literature? I have no right to take your time to answer such professional questions as these, but in view of the disappointments that you have given me concerning *Atlantic* articles, I feel a certain necessity to get even with you in other ways.

And I will trouble you with one other question, if I may. Where are you going to spend the summer? Of course you will plan for your own discomfiture by answering such a question, but I will put it and see how generous and self-sacrificing you really are.

With all good wishes,
Very sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To Woodrow Wilson

June 20, 1898.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON:

It was a great pleasure to receive your letter in which you were kind enough to tell me about Bagehot. One of the many pleasures that I am promising myself this summer is to take up these books and see if there be any practical way to further his fame.

---

[1] The reference is to an edition of Bagehot published by the Traveller's Insurance Company, of Hartford, Conn. It was the personal enterprise of the scholarly president of that Company, Mr. James G. Batterson, who was a great admirer of the famous English economist and man of letters.

I am still more interested in what you say about your purpose to spend August and a part of September in this neighbourhood, and one of the penalties that you will have to pay will be to give at least a few hours to me.

By all means send along "A Lawyer with a Style."[1]

Very truly yours,
Walter H. Page.

Few remember that Wilson's first "boom" for the Presidency, although not a particularly resounding one, was launched in 1908—another year the Democratic Party turned to Bryan and to inevitable defeat. At that time Wilson was without practical political experience, yet Page regarded the mere discussion of his name as a hopeful sign of better things. In the ten years since the *Atlantic* days, he had closely followed Wilson's career as writer and educator, and with increasing interest and regard. There are many letters from Wilson during this period, though Page's have disappeared. As in the earlier days it was Wilson's literary charm that held first place in his admiration; in the intervening period the man's progress as historian, essayist, and political philosopher had justified all his early predictions. Yet the Wilsonian ideas on practical politics also seemed entirely sound. The nation had made tremendous strides in the ten preceding years; the rugged Cleveland had given way to the robustious Roosevelt; yet honesty in administration, and the use of the Government for public advantage rather than for private pelf were the outstanding questions of 1907, as of Cleveland's time. To the party "shibboleths," as they were called in the early 'nineties, a new and strange galaxy of public issues had succeeded. The Rooseveltian democracy, expressing itself through the medium of the Republican Party, was founded on such policies and devices as trust regulation, railroad control, direct primaries, the income tax, popular election of United States Senators, the Initiative and Referendum and the Recall. Yet the need that dominated all others was ability and honesty in high office. Page vastly admired Roosevelt's work, especially the new vitality he had given the popular conscience. Who could succeed him? In this connection Wilson's name as a Presidential possibility first appears. "A good deal of gossip," Page wrote in January, 1907, "certainly not authorized and probably irresponsible, continues to find its way into the newspapers, touching the possible entrance into high politics of President Woodrow Wilson, of Princeton University, in New Jersey. First, he was suggested as a Democratic candidate for the United States Senate, and later as a possible Presidential candidate—as an antidote proposed to the party for both Bryanism and Hearstism.

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[1] The lawyer was Sir Henry Maine. The article was published in the *Atlantic*, September, 1898.

"The suggestion will hardly bear fruit, it is feared; for President Wilson is not a politician, and he is a right-minded man of a safe and conservative political faith. He would not have the Government own the railroads; he would not stir up discontent; he has no fortune; he does not speak the language either of Utopia or of riot. But, if the Democratic Party should come to its senses again next year and assert its old doctrines and take on its old dignity, and seek real leadership (and pray Heaven, it may!) leaving its Bryans and its Hearsts alone, this suggestion of President Wilson is logical, sound, dignified, and decent. Here is a man of high character, and of the best political ideals, a man who knows our history, our laws, and the genius of our people, American to the core and linked by inheritance and by training to the best traditions of the past, a man who has had such executive experience as a University presidency demands (and that is a good deal), a man of a wide acquaintance, and of a mind of his own. He comes of a Southern family—was reared and chiefly educated in the South—but has lived the wider life of a citizen of the Republic. His venerated father was as staunch and beautiful a character as ever adorned and made strong the Presbyterian pulpit. Although his life has been spent in academic pursuits, he is a man of a practical mind and he knows men as well as books. He uses our language with both strength and charm; he has a sense of humour; and he is a Democrat of the best traditions. What if a political miracle should happen and the long-lost old party should find itself by nominating such a man?"'

Four more years saw Wilson, after a preliminary term as Governor of New Jersey, a conspicuous candidate for the Democratic nomination. Into the Wilson campaign no one entered with a greater zest than Walter Page. In the preliminary stages of that proceeding Page played an important part, though there is no vivid record of his activities in the shape of letters. In one stirring episode, however, his views brought reassurance to Wilson—the famous Harvey incident of January, 1912. Mr. George Harvey had been one of the first detectors of Mr. Wilson's availability as a Presidental candidate; his name, indeed, had become closely associated with the Wilson movement. Mr. Harvey's identification with Wall Street millionaires inevitably caused misgivings in certain "progressive" quarters; the Bryan wing of the party particularly was asking questions concerning it. Did it mean that Mr. Wilson himself willingly accepted support from such suspicious sources? The newspapers were giving so much space to this phase of the new candidacy that Mr. Harvey, in the course of a discussion with Mr. Wilson, asked him point-blank whether his support were proving an embarrassment. The answer came frankly that it was. Mr. Harvey at once withdrew Mr. Wilson's name from the masthead of *Harper's Weekly*, of which he was the editor, and betook himself to a position outside the breastworks. In the public discussion that followed Col. Henry Watterson, editor of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, took a somewhat boisterous part. In the view of an old-fashioned Democratic politician, as Colonel Watterson was, the Governor of New Jersey was simply an "ingrate," who readily enough used men to climb to power, and then despatched them as soon as they had ceased to be useful. To which Mr. Wilson's obvious reply was that Mr. Harvey had asked a frank question and had received a frank answer. That the answer was a true one was apparent to all who had followed the Wilson campaign. Mr. Harvey, closely identified with big financial interests, was clearly an impediment to a man who was seeking the presidency exclusively on popular lines.

To Woodrow Wilson

January 22, 1912.

MY DEAR WILSON:

As I read the public mind the Harvey incident is having a good effect and will continue to have. Harvey enabled you to speak out on Wall Street without making an attack on Wall Street. Everybody by this time is asking himself, "Well, ought Governor Wilson have lied to Harvey by evading the question or by softening his answer?" Then, too, it's pretty generally understood, except in boss and poker circles, that it is necessary to incur Marse Henry's rhetoric if you have any positive value or character. You've put him precisely where he belongs—"a fine old gentleman." That is friendly. Yet, to those who know, the area of inference is large. Leave him there. Nothing can vanquish him like silence. It's the one thing he can't understand or tilt with.

And, of course, the main matter, which Colonel Watterson has tried to obscure, hasn't been forgotten—the popular inference about Harvey's backing. You've answered that suspicion or fear—of having the support of Wall Street—without making any attack on anybody in Wall Street.

I think the incident is working good results. And, so far as I can see, it is a positive asset. You are even saved the trouble of making any explanation!

Again, as often, the right sort of enemies turn out to be more valuable than the wrong sort of friends.

Very heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

"As for Mr. Wilson's personal qualities," wrote Page after the Presidential election of 1912, "he is dignified simplicity itself. He cannot do a merely spectacular thing. For instance, no newspaper correspondent during the six months of their inquisitive attention to details thought to say how he was dressed. He has manners and, therefore, few mannerisms. A quiet, modest gentleman with a spirit of good comradery when he is in congenial company, his prime interests are intellectual. He is a good story-teller and many of his stories come from unusual sources—good old books of English literature, and especially from Bagehot. No other man in America has Bagehot so well in mind. He plays a fair game of golf, he has a fondness for baseball—now, of course, as a spectator—he can ride a horse when he must, he is a good walker, he eats sparingly and carefully, he sleeps well and long, and thus finds complete physical restoration. The charm of the man is his well-balanced, cheerful philosophy, for he takes life with a keen relish but with quiet dignity and genuine reverence, tempered with humour; and in his talk as in his public speeches his clear-cut mastery of good speech is notable. We have never had a president who expressed himself in such vigorous, pure English, nor a man with a better mental furnishing. It will be no small incident, therefore, of Mr. Wilson's Administration that the political philosophy which he holds will find adequate expression. We shall have state papers better written than any preceding modern examples of this rather heavy form of literature. We shall have public utterances without boasting and without commonplace."

In writing these sentences, Page was not thinking of world wars, of America as the participant in a great European conflict, of Anglo-American friendship, of the tremendous scene on which the Wilson Administration was to play its part. He looked upon the new President as a man who would reform the tariff, curb the selfish exactions of wealth, regulate the railroads and the trusts, use the powers of government for enlarging the lives of the masses, and introduce new standards into American public life. He sent Mr. Wilson, at the latter's request, plans for improving country life and benefiting the farmers and their families. On only one point of more extended view did Page attempt to arouse the new President's interest. The American occupation of the Philippines he looked upon as presenting special duties. So far that occupation had been a great success—perhaps the most successful colonial experiment in history, for it had concentrated on the administration and development of the islands exclusively for the benefit of the natives. New ideas were afloat, chiefly advanced by Democratic leaders, which Page regarded as unwholesome. The time had not come, he believed, for independence, or indeed for any larger measure of self-government than the Filipinos already enjoyed. This apprehension that the new President, as a stalwart upholder of democracy and freedom, might listen to the advocates of these proposals—as, in fact, he ultimately did, much to the damage of the Filipinos themselves—was probably the reason Page wrote the following letter.

To Woodrow Wilson

Garden City, N. Y.,
New Year's Day, 1913.

My dear Wilson:

A suggestion: Commission the man in whose judgment you'd have the most confidence, to master, digest, condense, classify, and index all the literature of our occupation of the Philippines; then to go there and make as thorough an examination as possible—to study the people; let him have two or three or more most competent secretaries; and let him bring you late next summer not only his opinion but the opinion of every man who knows.

Then, by the opening of the regular session of Congress in December, you would have all the information that can be got in the world—of every class of men.

Set such a man at work now on the literature—silently—and let him sail March 5th.

This, for reasons that I do not know, may be of no value, but it is offered in the spirit of humble helpfulness.

Sincerely yours,
Walter H. Page.

The President-elect replied that he was much interested in the proposal but saw no way of carrying it out. Where was the money to come from?

The confidence that Page felt in the new Administration is evident from the letter written to his old friend, Mr. David F. Houston, on the latter's appointment as Secretary of Agriculture—a post to which many had urged the President to appoint Page himself.

To David F. Houston

Cosmos Club, Washington, D. C.,
Sunday, March 2, 1913.

MY DEAR HOUSTON:

How fast our big, good dreams come true! I have never before felt such confidence in government as a means of human progress. Every good thing that we care most about now seems possible—things that we have talked about to men who did not understand, things that we have dreamed of and hardly dared hope for. With my congratulations, I must express a certain elation. I have hardly been able to keep the secret of your appointment since Wilson told me.

God bless us, life gets better and better worth while. When you need a friendly lamp-post (when red tape hinders and the wolves howl) climb up and lean on me!

I have an invitation for you, which I'll send to your office. It was given a week ago and it's interesting and important.

Always heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

On March 28th, President Wilson, in a brief but cordial letter, offered Page the Ambassadorship to Great Britain. On the margin of his letter accepting the post Page wrote:

"Even things never dreamed of come true—in this glad year." It was characteristic that his decision once made, Page's mind should turn to one of his closest friends and his fellow worker in many educational battles, then recuperating from a serious illness at Saranac, New York.

To Edwin A. Alderman

Garden City, New York,
March 27, 1913.

MY DEAR ED. ALDERMAN:

You, I will tell in advance, and no other man at a distance. Our friend in the White House pays me the high compliment and imposes on me the high duty of going as Ambassador to England. After wrestling with my fears of my ability to do such a task with distinction, I have let the spirit of adventure, which, I find, still stirs in me, lead me on. That may be a kindly light or an unkindly. But I have this morning given my consent.

Wilson and Houston are doing their new high tasks with joy and with promise of effective distinction. How we all wish you were out to join in the game. An old Southern friend of mine, who has sporting blood in his old veins, said yesterday: "By God! You fellows are playing the game with all blue chips."

These, however, are mere items of the passing day. The much more important thing is—are you making continued real progress? I so gather. Ask Mrs. Alderman to write me; and with all my love, old friend,

Yours,
W. H. P.

Of course, absolute secrecy is necessary till the President chooses to give it out.

Thus the "spirit of adventure" led Page on. And the parting advice of the President—the only thing resembling instructions Page ever received when he left for England—has a particular interest in view of subsequent events and the relations between the two men.

"Go," said Mr. Wilson, "and be yourself!"

CHAPTER II

AN AMERICAN DEMOCRAT AT THE COURT OF ST. JAMES'S

I

PAGE arrived in London in the latter part of May, 1913. The events of the next ten years have made this period seem rather uninspiring, yet Page, had he gone about the matter deliberately, could have selected no more congenial time for his introduction into British politics and British society. The causes to which he had devoted the most active energies of forty years had now apparently gained the upper hand in England. The rapidly unfolding scene was, as Page described it in his letters to President Wilson, little less than a "revolution." A crisis was approaching which, in its effect upon popular government, could be compared only with Magna Charta, the Puritan rebellion of Cromwell's time, and the Revolution of 1688. In political proposals, in Parliament, in the press, and in general conversation, the ideas that held the popular mind were democracy, Home Rule, industrial and educational reform, and the wholesale transformation of the British political and social structure in the interest of the masses. Page, one of the most American of Americans, reached London at the very moment when American conceptions were exerting a strong influence on the country which, next to his own, claimed first place in his affections. The man who was chiefly responsible for embodying these ideas in action, Mr. David

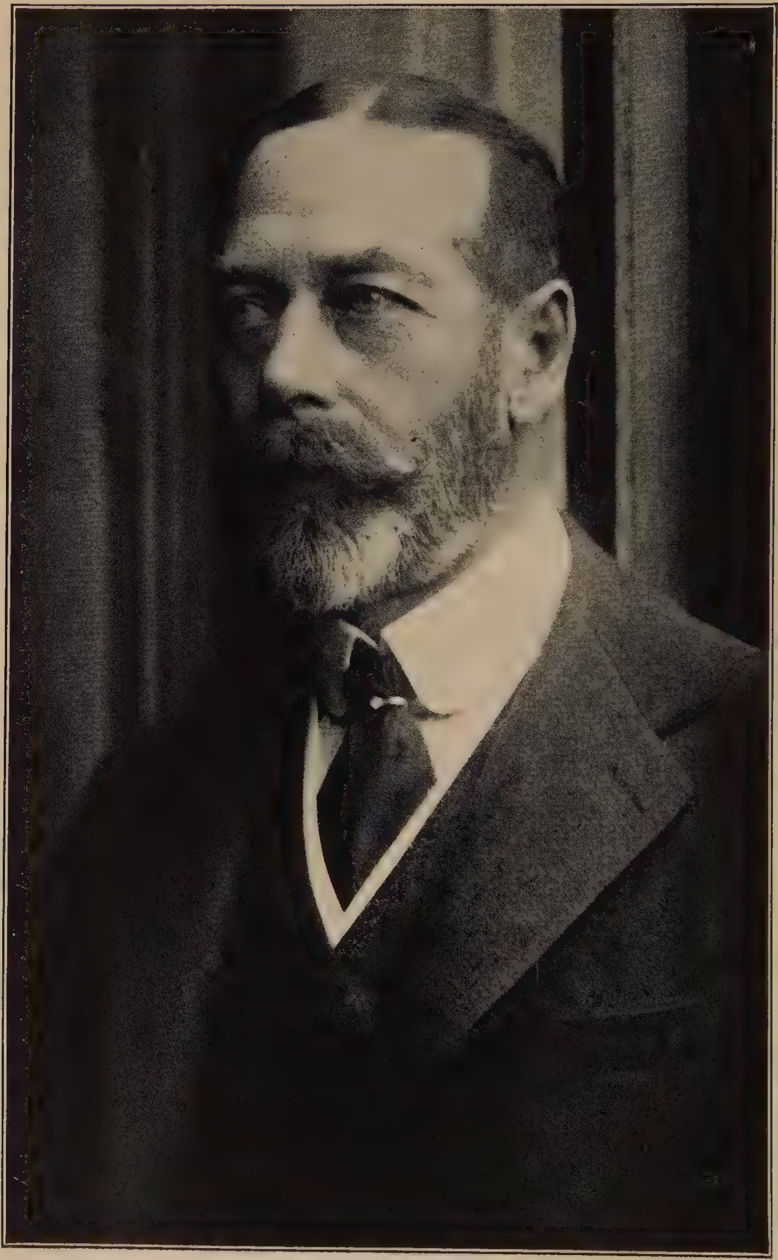
Lloyd George, had drawn more inspiration from the statesmen of America than any man who had risen to great position in British public life.

The new era dawning in Great Britain was the era of Page's old familiar figure, "The Forgotten Man." Not democracy merely in its political sense,—the sense of popular suffrage, representative parliaments, and responsible cabinets; in these things Page was far less interested than in democracy as a social force,—as a method of improving the lives and enlarging the material and spiritual horizon of the daily workers. That was the phase of democracy which had filled Page's thoughts from his earliest days, and the emergence of the neglected millions in England as participants in all the best that England provided was the ambition now dominant in the minds of the leading British statesmen. The most successful nation was not necessarily the one that had the largest army, the finest navy, the oldest aristocracy, the most ancient established church, the most successful foreign policy, the greatest merchants, and the most profitable foreign trade, but the one that had the greatest proportion of its masses industrious, intelligent, well fed, comfortably clad and sheltered, healthful, and economically self-sufficient. Page looked upon such things as caste, privilege, idleness, and luxury, as, in Burke's famous phrase, "The solemn plausibilities of the world," and as having no reality in modern life. What chance had the average boy and girl for education? What opportunities were placed in his way for the development of his character and abilities? Was the product of his own efforts his own reward, or was the larger part of it devoted to supporting an infinitely small minority of the nation in idleness? The great duty of the state was not the extension of empire, but the more enlightened business of "freeing men," and freeing them not only from the trammels of tradition but from their own ignorance. For the few years preceding Page's ambassadorship this conception of a nation had been gaining favour in this ancient country and by 1913 progress had become so rapid that, in the eyes of the conservative classes, England was about to fall in ruins.

No more profound admirer of England had ever lived than this new American ambassador; for twenty-five years, as editor and public speaker, he had advocated the intimate association of Great Britain and the United States as the one thing that would best promote human advancement; and English literature, from his boyhood, had been his main intellectual pursuit. For British democracy also, in its political aspects, he had a great respect. The debt of his own country to the political institutions of Great Britain he never wearied of portraying. Freedom, equality before the law, popular control of law-making, a government perhaps even more immediately in the hands of the voters than was that of the United States—all these things he definitely realized. Page's conception of democracy, however, was primarily Jeffersonian. This conception he had absorbed as a young man while poring over Randall's now antiquated but still indispensable life of the great Virginian. For Jefferson as Governor of Virginia, as a frequently timid and vacillating president, and as a not over-scrupulous political manager, Page had abundant criticism, but he found the world's foremost political philosopher in the Jefferson who split up the great estates of Virginia and caused their division among the men who cultivated the soil, who abolished the union of Church and State, and who insisted on the free education of every boy and girl as the first duty of the commonwealth. The extent to which these and similar purposes inspired a nation measured the extent, in Page's view, to which a nation had become democratic. It was because the England of 1913 was undergoing this transformation, was attempting, with infinite difficulty, to break with its past and strike out on fundamentally new lines, that the scene to which Page had now been so unexpectedly transported, filled him with interest and enthusiasm.

For those who are inclined to hold Great Britain responsible for the World War a study of this England of 1913 and 1914, as unfolded in Page's letters, should be an enlightening experience. The note that will become so dominant after July, 1914—the endless resonance of war—is at first faintly heard. The topics are Home Rule, Land Reform, the advantages and the disadvantages of the aristocracy. The prevailing excitement was the struggle that was taking place between the old and the new, the rich and the poor. The subject that aroused practically no interest was the European situation. Not a world war, but a class war—and the threat of a civil war over Ireland—was the kind of a conflict that threatened the peace of Britain. The demonstrations of the suffragettes caused far more apprehension than the manœuvres of the German fleet. The man who was making the greatest noise was not the Kaiser, but Lloyd George. This ferocious spectre, as the Tory mind regarded him, had now attained high ascendancy over the British populace. Like most imaginative and earnest and impulsive statesmen, Lloyd George easily furnished points of criticism and attack, but one quality at least had remained constant for more than thirty years of public life; and it was a quality which, in the eyes of a sturdy democrat like Page, redeemed a multitude of errors. This was the determination to make Great Britain a happier and more

Woodrow Wilson in 1896



His Majesty George V.

fruitful country for the masses. Of the sincerity of this passion, for it was nothing less, no one who has followed this great political career can have the slightest question. A blazing indignation for the injustices heaped upon the poor; a sympathy for the misery and the straitened daily routine of the workers; a determination to give every man a fair chance; a hatred of the artificialities that have caused, through the ages, such an infinity of bleak and wasted lives,—these were the convictions that have made Lloyd George such a sincere and effective man. In this, his great side, there was much in common between Page and the fiery Welshman. Many of the speeches in which the British statesman assailed the historic system remind one of the strictures which Page had so frequently laid upon conditions in his own Southern States. When Lloyd George announced that "the day of the cottage man has dawned" he was merely expressing the main idea of Page's speech on the "Forgotten Man." The "implacable warfare" which, as the Chancellor said in presenting his famous Budget of 1909, he proposed to wage "on poverty and squalidness," was precisely the warfare in which Page had been engaged since boyhood. Even the language of picturesque and uncompromising violence which Lloyd George found essential for expressing his programme aroused the same rage in propertied circles as had Page's fierce denunciations in the previously placid atmosphere of North Carolina and Virginia.

More important still, the changes which the democratic movement was bringing about in England were mainly the things which, as Page believed, were responsible for the prosperity of his own country. The accession of the Asquith ministry had heralded Great Britain's final break with mediævalism. The Budget of 1909 was merely the beginning of a comprehensive system of land reform, a system that meant the ultimate splitting up of the old estates and the division of the soil among the cultivators. The act of the House of Lords in rejecting this Budget had brought about the greatest constitutional change of eight hundred years, for it had resulted in reforms which had practically meant the end of that body as a legislative force and had lodged all political power in the popularly elected House of Commons. Though the most exciting topic of 1913 was Home Rule, the fact was well known that the disturbance over this proposal was merely obscuring legislation that the Cabinet regarded as far more important—legislation whose purpose was the emancipation of the masses. The creation of a great system of popular education was a leading item in this programme. The separation of Church and State was another; the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales—a change since accomplished—was generally regarded as only preliminary to its disestablishment in England itself. The abolition of primogeniture and entail, the very basis of the landed aristocracy, was another idea that was winning favour. Perhaps the chief value of Page's correspondence of this period is that it gives a picture of the aristocratic mind in face of these impending changes. An Ambassador is necessarily attached to the Court; even though he deliberately seek other more democratic scenes and friends—as Page constantly did—a large part of his time is spent in the official and diplomatic circles and with the "upper" classes. The spectacle of this American democrat in London writing to another democrat in the White House, giving his impressions of a social order naturally alien to both, and describing the attitude of country houses and Mayfair toward those causes of democratic progress in which the sympathies of both were keen, is an almost unprecedented phenomenon. To both also it was a profitable revelation. The violent transformation of an ancient social order was quite a different process from the creation of Jeffersonian conditions in a new country. In England of the twentieth century there were obstacles, physical and spiritual—the almost sacred accumulation of many centuries of history—which had not impeded progress in the new America. Not only did Page recognize their existence, but he appreciated their meaning, and even, as his letters show, entertained for them a sympathetic understanding and a definite respect. It is a particularly refreshing revelation, and in itself a striking evidence of the responsive quality of his mind, that he quickly perceived these differences. Obviously a lifetime spent in preaching democracy had not obscured, in his eyes, the virtues of the English upper class. His honest recognition of the many high qualities of the British nobility is a note which is at once heard in his early correspondence, and which becomes more emphasized in war time. His distinction between the plutocracy that has nothing but wealth—too much the case in his own country—and the plutocracy that has not only wealth, but culture, traditions, an elevated patriotism, and a highly developed sense of social responsibility, is perhaps one of the most stimulating comparisons Page drew between American and British life. He made the same discovery, too, that Emerson had made nearly seventy years before: that the real strength of the British nobility consisted in a certain democratic principle; that it did not rest exclusively upon birth and antiquity, but that it had for centuries appropriated talent and character, wherever these qualities might be found. "There was this advantage of western over oriental nobility," says Emerson in his *English Traits*, "that this was recruited from below.

English history is aristocracy with the doors open. Who has courage and faculty, let him enter." True as this was in 1847, it was immeasurably truer in 1914, when Page saw many almost startling instances of that system of "eugenics" that explains so much of English history.

Page, always a free-trader, regarded the protective tariff as one of the obstacles to the economic predominance of the United States. Free trade in itself he looked upon as almost essential to democracy. He therefore characteristically read his own meaning in the new Underwood tariff act of 1913. There is a certain appropriateness in the fact that he sent his congratulations to President Wilson from Mr. Andrew Carnegie's Scottish home.

To the President

Skibo Castle,
Dornoch, Sutherland,
Scotland, September 12, 1913.

Dear Mr. President:

Score one! You have done a great historic deed and demonstrated and abundantly justified your leadership.

I have been telling Bagehot's successor in the editorship of the *Economist* that the passing of commercial supremacy to the United States will be dated in the economic histories from the Tariff act of 1913 just as so many things in this realm are dated from the Reform bill; and that, although nothing sudden and nothing spectacular is going to happen, the freeing of great forces will work this inevitable change by the time he can adjust the thought of his readers to it. The change will come so quietly that it will be here before they are aware.

A large section of British opinion understands this. For example, there are here in this castle of help[1] the heads of the Scotch universities, and even they forget their quest of succour long enough to assent to this view. We can still more easily command British capital now—the best proof that we compel their proper envy.

It is so good to be alive at such a time that I have driven my golf ball clean over the greens and lost the game from excitement.

My congratulations!

Most heartily yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

Page's letters, already published,[2] have described his attempts to explain, to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office, the purpose that directed Mr. Wilson's intricate Mexican policy. The President believed that the prompt recognition of political adventurers who, by blood and iron, had seized the headship of state, simply encouraged the revolutionary habit in the unstable republics of Central and South America. The one way to discourage this practice and to introduce something resembling democratic order, was to withhold recognition from such unworthy aspirants. That this new policy in Washington involved many difficulties the results sufficiently show, and the Ambassador's efforts to make even so enlightened a statesman as Sir Edward Grey accept this point of view had not been too successful. Yet Page never missed an opportunity to set forth the new Wilsonian ideas. He was constantly mingling with representatives of all classes of British life—statesmen, writers, university professors, and journalists—and on all occasions he freely discoursed on the principles that inspired a policy that at first had much confused them. An especially interested and appreciative listener was the King himself. The idea that the President's intention was to give the Mexican people, and all other peoples of Latin America, a chance for self-government, and to lay the basis of stability in lands where there had previously been only revolution, much impressed His Majesty. "I think he really understands," wrote Page, "but I suspect that he puts an English rather than a democratic value on it." The one thing about the Mexican situation that caused King George some apprehension was the possibility that it might strain Anglo-American relations. "I don't want anything done," His Majesty told Page, "that may cause us to be misunderstood by your people. Our friendship and good understanding shall not be broken, impatient investors and yellow journals to the contrary notwithstanding."

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[1] Mr. Andrew Carnegie had always been generous to the educational institutions of his own country.

[2] See Volume I, Chapters VI and VII.

"He is frank, friendly, and well informed," Page wrote to the President, reporting this interview. "I confess to a keen enjoyment of the conversation."

Many phases of the aristocracy depressed Page—its luxury, its jewels, its gold plate, and the servility of the lower classes—and he could never quite persuade himself that the world in which he moved was a real one. "This play world," he wrote, describing a visit to a famous country house, "this make-believe enjoyment of things that no longer exist, this left-over backwater in the stream that has run by." He never hesitated to discuss, in public and private, the contrasting qualities of American and English life. When the Royal Institution invited him to lecture, he took as his subject, "Some Aspects of the American Democracy." The Duke of Northumberland, a Tory of particularly ancient lineage, presided, and was compelled to listen—and not with especially good grace, if the truth may be told—to Page's vivid insistence on the rights of the "millions who dwell on the soil" as superior to those who occupy the manor house. It is easy to imagine that other facts and phrases scattered through this address may not have fallen any too gently on ducal ears. "There is something better than good government and that is government in which all the people have a part." In America "we have neither entail nor primogeniture." "'What shall our children do?' not 'What were our fore-fathers?' is the insistent question." While this lecture may have produced a slight ripple of discontent in certain quarters, in the main Page found that the discussion of these topics was a fair field in Great Britain. His answer to a noble lady gave an eloquent and comprehensive picture of the benefits of American life.

"As we talked in the drawing room to-night," he writes, "a marchioness—a clever woman—said:

"'I still hope to go to the States. Now what shall I see there as the visible fruits of your democracy?'

"The *visible* fruits, Madam, will be more millions of men than live in your kingdom, whose homes fill the vast valley which is more than a thousand fertile miles wide, every one of whom lives in plenty, most of them on their own land, under a blue sky and a beneficent Deity and a government of their own making. It's subtle—the difference—but believe me, it's real."

"'You all believe in it,' said she, 'and I wish to see it.'"

Never did Page display that bumptious attitude toward royalty which many Americans—mainly of a past generation—seemed to regard as an essential ingredient of free-born democracy. The development of a nation, he realized, was a complicated natural process; the institutions that prevailed as a result of the social and political interactions of a thousand years must be taken seriously even when they differed from one's own; and, as he looked deeply into the foundations of British life he saw, more clearly than most of his countrymen, the material and even the spiritual purposes they served. "The royalty in this Kingdom," he wrote to the President, "is an interesting thing. This couple are immensely popular. Kipling talks about 'my sovereign' as Moses talked of the ark of the covenant. Royalty will not go out till some revolution of some sort put it out—put out some profligate monarch, if another come. They know too much to stand in Lloyd George's way; and, since Cromwell, nobody has dared take the risk of questioning their right to exist. Socially, they are impregnable, and the shrewdness with which the whole social structure is built is equalled only by the excellence of the organization of the Roman Church. Donald Smith was a poor boy in a Scotch village. He put thro' the Canadian Pacific Railway and became Baron Strathcona and Mt. Royal, of Glencoe, K. C. M. G., etc. He lies dead in London and they will bury him from the great Abbey to-morrow morning, and nearly the whole party now here will go to the funeral, the Duke of Argyll as one of the pall bearers. And they offered to bury him in the Abbey. This is what royalty and its sequences and surroundings denote. His daughter is now Baroness Strathcona and her son will sit in the House of Lords. James J. Hill was an early friend of Donald Smith's—a Canadian, too. He also built a transcontinental railway. But his son is only 'Louis' to every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the Northwest."

To the President

6 Grosvenor Square, W.
22 Feb., 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The feeling is strong here (I encounter it in London, in Leeds, in Newcastle) that our government wishes to prohibit European financial adventurers from exploiting Central and South America because we wish to exploit them ourselves! I had the hardihood to attack this error in speeches before important bodies in Leeds and Newcastle. Those who heard me seemed to accept my explanation, but I continually hear of others who smile at our pious pretensions. Men who have looked on at the parcelling out of the world and have taken part in it don't all at once think of the people that dwell on a land before they think of the land itself. This is one interesting test of the great distance that Old World thought is behind our thought in all matters of popular government and popular welfare. I am constantly surprised to discover how far ahead of them we have travelled. I told the German Ambassador[1] here the other night that we wished no more territory and didn't want Mexico as a free gift of the gods. He looked at me—a mere glimpse of one one hundredth of a second—and I saw this flit across his mind: "You are a consummate liar or an irresponsible idiot." Then our conversation went on on a level of proper dignity. I'm sure such a proposition is simply incomprehensible to him. In this Kingdom the Tories do not understand the vocabulary that the Liberals use, and the Liberals wouldn't understand our democratic vocabulary. They have no idea of our notion of freeing men.

Another revelation that I constantly get is the depth of their feeling about the Panama tolls.[1] A journalist of good character and a shrewd fellow has been getting signatures of members of the House of Commons to a petition to the Government to reconsider its decision about the San Francisco Fair.[2] Nearly every man who refuses him remarks, "Let 'em first keep their treaty." He tells me that it is the first time in his lifetime that he has encountered a definite anti-American feeling among any considerable number of Englishmen. Correspondingly, of course, they applaud you for your present effort and hope and expect success. But they resent the act—even bitterly.

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[1] Prince Lichnowsky, afterward famous for his denunciations of the Kaiser.

Still, deeper down than these symptoms, they like us, envy us, admire us, and in the coming years, as economic changes give us an even clearer lead, they will follow us. I was never so sure that the command is ours and will fall into our hands more and more. Their great power is the accumulated capital of three exploiting centuries, and chiefly that—with the machinery of trade and of authority that they have set up with it.

Another fact I've learned is—they make as many mistakes as we do, and as silly; for example Ulster, Carden.

Very heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

"I venture to say," wrote Page to the President in March, 1914, "that no man is more eager to serve you or to help toward the building of a foreign policy worthy of the country than I am; I've got immensely interested in it, and I even believe that I see ways to do it. . . .

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[1] See Volume I, Chapter VIII.

[2] In 1914 the American Government invited Great Britain to participate in the San Francisco Exposition to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal. The British declination for a time produced a certain irritation in the United States. Though the suggestion was repudiated that it was caused by the American policy on Canal Tolls, the conviction was prevalent that the British refusal was not unrelated to it.

The wretched thing is that there is so much honest ignorance—downright ignorance. Why doesn't some man who knows tell the whole truth, if it can be told without boasting—that we are so big and strong and rich, that the economic and political future of the world so clearly belongs to us, that it is impossible for any American man who sees the nations in their proper proportions and relations to fear or tremble or imitate or 'truckle to'[1] or to ask any improper favours of any nation on earth—that the 'trucklers' are those that kick up all this dust—they and only they? So far as this government is concerned and this nation, if we keep faith with it, we can do with it whatever we like. They will go any honourable length to please us. Wherever I go—as a few days ago to Aberdeen—this is made obvious in a hundred ways. The whole Liberal fight here is confessedly to bring this Kingdom, as far as they know how and dare try, up to the economic level and practice of the United States: that's their standard and aim. If it were said that they are 'truckling' to us, that would be near the truth."

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
London, May 1, '14.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Every body here hopes us well with this troublesome problem of Mexico. As I have telegraphed you, I am sure a definite word was sent all along the line that this government will help us in every way it can. I have happened within the last few days to talk with men of such other differences as John Burns, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Brig. Gen'l Fowke, of the Army, Lord Morley, and the Attorney General (Sir John Simon); and they all say the same thing about our bad job in Mexico and how they wish us well and stand with us. The newspapers, too, in spite of a lot of foolish stuff they print and in spite of criticism of our refusing to recognize Huerta, are friendly in their comment. We constantly receive letters from men here who wish to volunteer in our army.

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[1] Like most American Ambassadors to Great Britain, Page had been accused of "truckling" to the British.

The passage of the repeal of the discriminating clause in the Panama Canal tolls act is taken for granted; but, when the Senate does it, it will be received here with hearty praise and appreciation. But I have heard several notes of depression about the volume and the violence of Anglophobia in the United States. I told one member of the Government that I was surprised that he should remark this, since they had unsuccessfully dealt with the Irish for three centuries: was it graceful to hold us responsible for so much of their failure as went over the sea? Of course, this is by no means the whole answer and they know it.

On the other hand, while there is no organized anti-American feeling here corresponding to the Irish in the United States, there are two kinds of dislike of America and of the Americans. The old aristocratic Tory argument of a generation or two ago—that a republic was sure to fail because, of course, they wished it to fail and therefore vindicate their order of things—you run across that feeling in curious ways, or survivals of it. I sat by a remarkable old lady at dinner the other night, the daughter of one earl and the wife of another, and of course the mother of a third who now holds the title—this old dowager has no active animosities, but she is full of the naïf notions that were more or less active when she was young—that a democracy is necessarily vulgar and venal. She confessed surprise that our government had survived so long.

"My father used to prove that a republic is necessarily short-lived."

"Yes," said I, "that's easy to do now. But the important fact is that it does exist, stronger and better than ever."

This old Tory notion of the corruption of the United States crops up oftener than you would think, and there lurks in it a sort of aristocratic hope that it will yet fail. But this is not an active anti-American feeling. It is rather a social resentment of the success of a democratic order of society. It is, I am sure, becoming more and more merely a subject of historical interest—a curious survival that has no very important meaning now.

The other anti-American feeling is really more important for it has its root in something like economic envy. I hear this in "the City"—in financial circles. If we begin seriously to supply capital to the outlying world and especially if we ever again begin to contest the shipping of the world with them, this feeling will become active. It cropped up the other day in a small way in my conversation with a book publisher. He was criticizing my partners because, in selling him the right to publish a book in England, they themselves kept the right in Canada—"as if," said he, "Canada were a part of the United States and not a British colony."

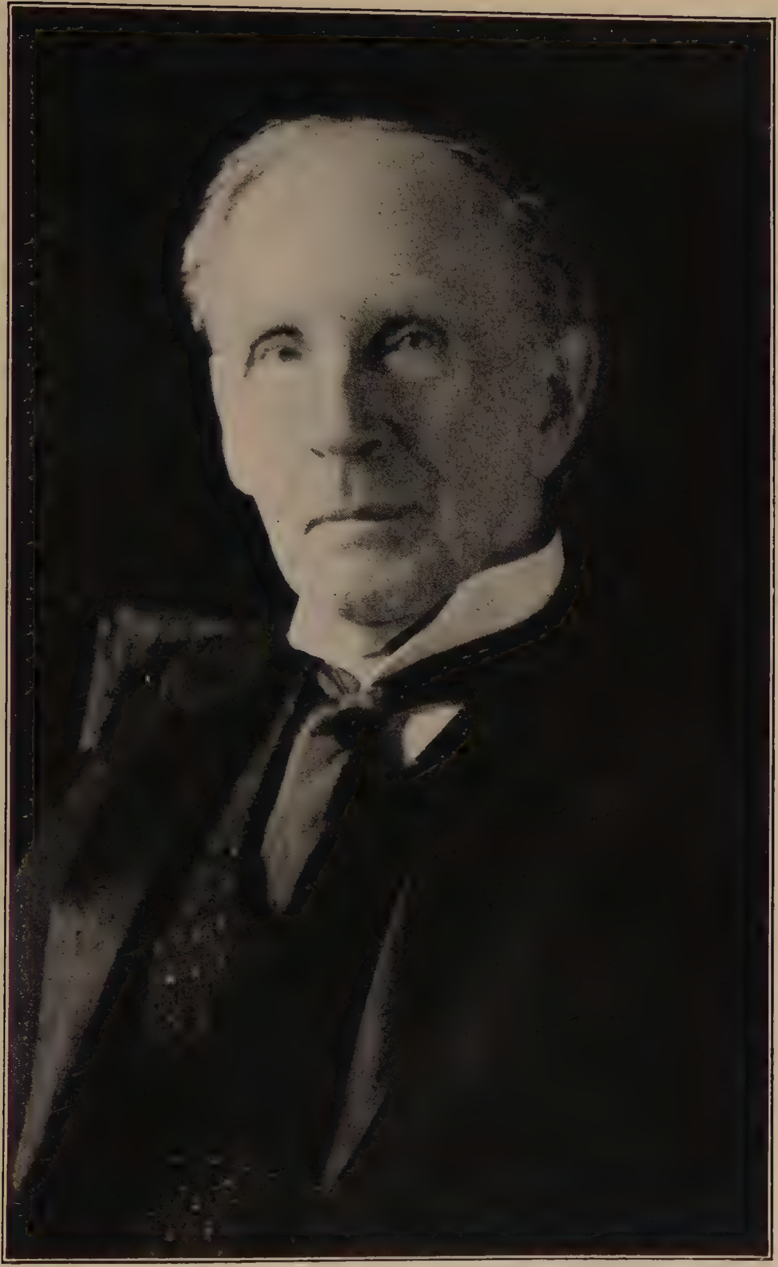
"See here," said I, "we can deliver books in Canada in twelve hours: it takes you ten days. Let's talk common sense."

Then he went off about the rapacity of Americans. I've heard the same kind of things said about the new Currency act, and about the efforts of Americans to do trade even in South America, where the British are already trading. The dense self-satisfaction of the Briton who feels that the world belongs to him is as real as it is amusing. This explains Carden and his kind, and the kind is multitudinous. Sir Edward Grey knows no more about trade than I know about the Upanishads. Yet when I corrected a memorandum of a conversation with me which he wrote out for Spring Rice and made it emphasize the moral and political issue in Mexico rather than the commercial, he said: "But I am sure you do not forget the commercial? They will not let *me* forget it." He has several times so spoken about the canal tolls. He has to use this formula in all his dealings! Economic envy may in the future play some real part in our dealings.

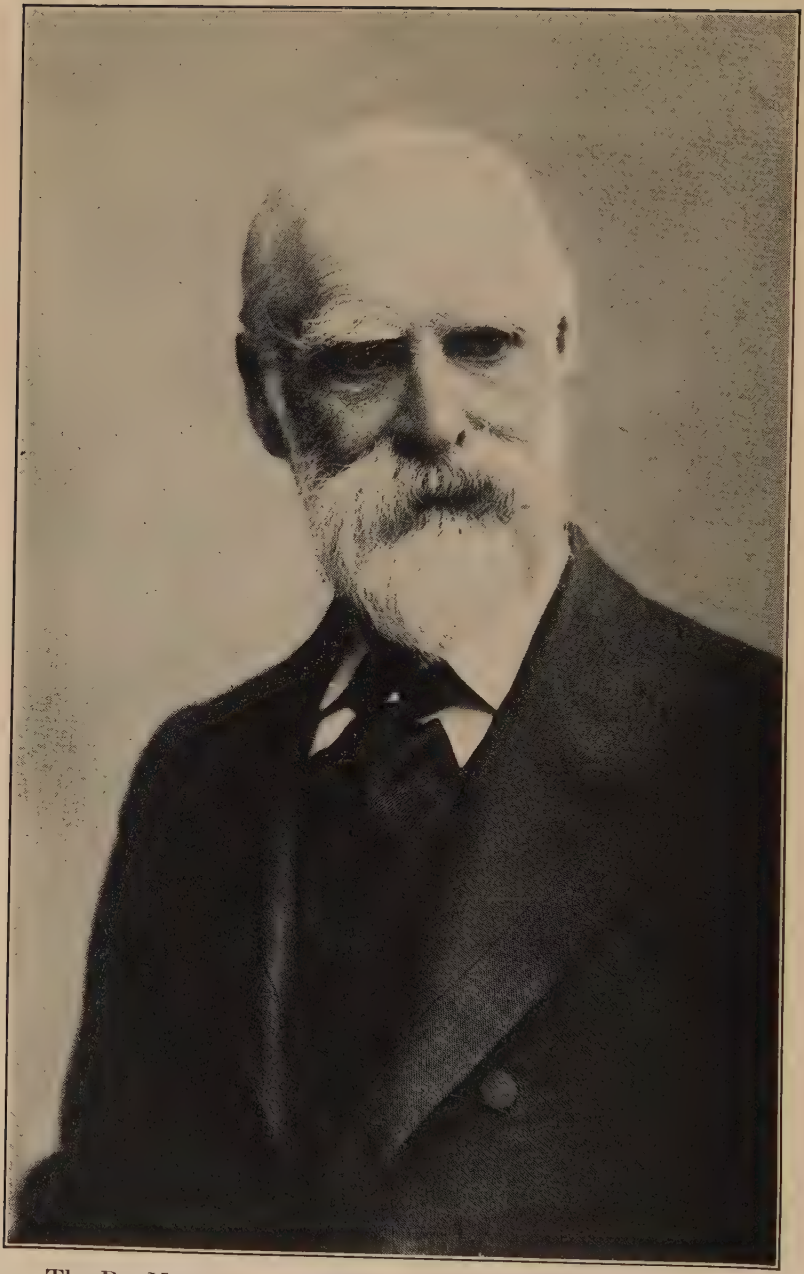
But this is not yet very active and is not at all organized. The only kind of action or event that could stir up any feeling against us is something that they regard as bad faith, like the Panama tolls discrimination, or something that offends their national pride, like our taking up with Villa, whom they regard as responsible for Benton's death.

And as for the old Tory feeling against any form of democracy, that's now hard put-to in their own Kingdom. Ulster has a case, I have no doubt. If I were an Ulsterman, I fear I, too, should object to being bound to the body of Dublin. Yet that doesn't touch the real question of the late stages of their controversy. The Conservatives have used Ulster and its army as a club to drive the Liberals out of power; and they have gone to the very brink of civil war. They don't really care about Ulster. I doubt whether they care much about Home Rule. They'd ship Ireland out to sea without much worry—except their own financial loss. It's the Lloyd George programme that infuriates them; and Ulster and anti-Home Rule are mere weapons to stop the general Liberal revolution, if they can. No man who has watched this ferocious fight can ever forget the danger of permitting any sort of privilege fastening itself on a community, for presently it comes to be regarded as a right and it will fight with all the airs of righteousness. They call these old Tories "Die Hards." It's a good name. They use military power, social power, financial power, eloquence, learning, boundless impudence, blackguardism—everything—to hold what they have; and they *fight*—fight like tigers and tire not; and sometimes they almost convince you. For instance, there's nothing more absurd or unfair or economically unreligious than the continuance of the Established Church in Wales, where by far the larger part of the people are Nonconformists, who are now forced to support their own churches and the Established Church as well. But the other evening I dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury; and when after dinner we went into the Lambeth Palace chapel for prayers (where the Archbishop's family has gone every night for 700 years), and a bishop of some diocese in Wales was telling me of the bishops that had been consecrated in that chapel all these centuries and had gone to the ends of the world, and he spoke of Laud and his execution as if Laud had been a personal friend of his—then, when in these surroundings, curtained off from the world of living men and women, he spoke with shame and grief and horror of the wicked effort to disestablish "God's Holy Church" in Wales and thus strike the first blow toward even the dethronement of His Most Gracious Majesty himself—I swear he almost persuaded me to be a Tory. When the appeal is made in the name of English history and of your vision of this conquering race sending its soldiers and sailors and bishops and adventurers to blaze ways for civilization on all seas and continents, it was that sort of an appeal that almost persuaded me to be a Tory—till I got out in the open air and drove over the bridge to Westminster Hall, where at 11:30 at night, the political partners of the Bishops were hectoring and insulting the Government in a way that ought to have put the Tower in commission again. They use this historic appeal—they use everything—to cling to their privileges, sometimes you think with all sincerity. *They* are English history; *they* are England; *they* are the Empire; and they point to all the strength and glory of the past to prove it—for all the world exactly as our own tariff nabobs used to point to every good thing in our land as of their bringing and as Wall Street used to prove that the prosperity of Yuba Dam in Arizona was of Wall Street's creation. Very many of the evils of this Old World come from the holding of all these special privileges: that seems to me an incontrovertible economic fact. And the genius of the race is showing itself in this steady struggle to abolish them gradually. But the struggle suffers from the oratorical temperament and the habit of inaccuracy of the chief agitator—curiously parallel to a chapter in our own history!

In our country, however, there is nothing noble or convincing in the beneficiaries of privilege: as a rule they are mere sponges with no more moral quality than sponges. Here they are in many respects the finest flower of British civilization. Physically they are remarkable. The noble families of this Kingdom have practised eugenics pretty well for centuries. Now and then there's a dirty duke (I know one who is the biggest liar in England); now and then a noble lord marries a rotter or gambles away his ancestral portraits. But, after all, they are few. The race isn't degenerating. I imagine that the noblemen of this generation on this island include more first-class men than those of any preceding generation. The error they make is to conclude that they owe their vitality to their special privileges. If you look at the House of



John Morley (1838–1923) the Rt. Hon. Viscount Morley
of Blackburn, O. M.



The Rt. Hon. Viscount Bryce, O. M., (1838–1922) British Ambassador to the United States, 1907–1913

Commons, the Opposition benches show more men of ability, of good mettle, of individual power than the government benches. They have every advantage except economic righteousness. They are fine old cocks in the House of Lords, too—with the same reservation. The idea, more or less popular in the United States, that they are playing out, is wholly wrong. What the future has in store is something like this—with the gradual conquest of liberal ideas over privilege, they gradually move forward—many younger sons move forward very fast, and they'll remain the rulers of the world till we accumulate money enough to take our turn at the wheel. There isn't going to be any such New Zealander as Macaulay predicted, and London Bridge will be open to traffic, I imagine, when Gabriel blows his trumpet. Good family stocks, kept good through centuries—that's the trick that has made English history.

. . . If you detect any note of sadness in this letter, you must not forget that we are in mourning for the Dowager Empress of Japan, following close upon our recent grief over the death of some Swedish royal person. These events make a strong pull on our emotions and on—my purse! My daughter fervently prays for the complete recovery of the Emperor of Austria. "For Dad," says she, "that'll mean more black dresses for both Mother and me." In spite of our grief I cannot help smiling at the way in which the news of our sorrow would be received in the rural parts of North Carolina, where our simple lives are known, and at the possible comment in the journalistic mouthpiece of our good friend of the Navy, who is so temperate in all things that excessive grief might seem a trifle forced!

But there are worlds within worlds that we never dream of. I had a dinner arranged to the German Ambassador, the cock-sure princeling who says to me every time I see him, "But you must do someding in Mexico," when the King came along and "commanded" us to attend the state ball on that evening in honour of the King and Queen of Denmark. My dinner—postponed and half broken up. And now the Duke of Argyll seems likely to die; and the King's Master of the Ceremonies, who called an hour ago, informs me that his death, if it occur, will knock out both the King's ball and my dinner for good, seeing that the Duchess is the King's aunt. The Duke is quite a man and his death will cause very genuine sorrow.[1]

In spite of all these mournful interruptions, I have to continue all the other parts of the game—at Stratford last week, for instance, by replying to the toast "to the immortal memory of Shakespeare" on the poet's birthday; and I led the procession of (I suppose) 10,000 persons, from all the world, to the grave, on which every one of us placed flowers—tons of them; and on the plaza in the village I unfurled the stars and stripes—all which may be duly witnessed daily this week in a moving picture show in London, admission sixpence, children fourpence. In my speech I said bluntly that Shakespeare was the greatest poet of all the world—this Englishman—in the hope that Chamberlain[2] might see it and ask in the Senate, "What's the matter with N. P. Willis?" But it seems to have escaped him, in spite of the promise of the Hearst correspondents to telegraph that paragraph to their papers. A very pretty and impressive thing, this annual Shakespeare celebration.

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[1] John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, ninth Duke of Argyll, who married Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria, died May 3, 1914.

[2] Senator George E. Chamberlain, of Oregon, had been particularly active in his criticisms of Page as a "truckler" to Great Britain. N. P. Willis, it may be necessary to explain, was one of the prominent figures in American literature for the first half of the 19th Century. His travel sketches were not without their charm, and his Biblical poems still have some vogue.

I hope that Laughlin[1] has gone over with you everything (if there be any especial thing) that you wish to know about here. I am sure that both he and Mrs. Laughlin will prove frank and veracious reporters.

And, most pleasant of all, we are looking forward with keen anticipations to the coming of McAdoo and his bride, tho' we have not yet heard the date of their expected arrival in England. If they come at the right time, we shall, of course, take them to Court—which Jessie and Frank missed by being married at the wrong time of the year.

Forgive so long a letter that contains so little that is worth while.

Yours always heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

II

Page's remarks on Shakespeare were a more serious matter than his bantering reference would indicate. The grace and substance of his appraisement made a deep impression on his audience as it did in all parts of the British Isles when published afterward as a special pamphlet. The value of Shakespeare as a link between the American and English peoples was one of Page's favourite topics. The fact that the Ambassador's ancestors, and the ancestors of practically all Americans of British stock, were living in England when Shakespeare did his greatest writing, inevitably made the poet as much an American as an English inheritance. Afterward Page took an important part in one of the most touching occasions of the war; on April 23, 1918, the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth—this anniversary representing one of the darkest days of the conflict—the school children of America and England joined in a common celebration, exchanging messages which were read in the schoolhouses of the two countries. The great importance Page attached to the usefulness of Shakespeare as a spiritual link between America and Britain was shown by the fact that almost the last letter he wrote in England—dated September 23, 1918—was addressed to Professor Israel Gollancz, of the University of London, who was especially interested in this aspect of Shakespeare's fame. Page's speech at Stratford is worth while also as an expression of an attitude toward literature which he had held from youth. He always insisted that great literature, first of all, must have the quality of sanity and healthy-mindedness.

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[1] Mr. Irwin Laughlin, Secretary of the American Embassy in London, was at that time in the United States.

"In the course of his intellectual development," Page said, "every man of independent spirit comes into a state of mind which compels him to say to himself: 'So far I have followed authority and I have shaped my opinions by the opinions of others. Now I must form judgments of my own.' Very soon in this progress he must ask: 'What is Shakespeare to me?'

"Then he reads the dramas from a new point of view. The scholars and the historians of literature and the commentators are forgotten except as they have become parts of his unconscious thought; the schoolmen are put out of doors; and the mood of merely literary study is laid aside. Such a man is now in search of life and of his own proper measure. That is a proud day for any man to reach; for he sets out on the most interesting journey of discovery that a man can take—the discovery of himself. He will presently find out whether his mental tastes be normal, his attitude to his fellows tolerant and rational, and whether he have a good intellectual grip and wind.

"It is in this way that every man who ever really profits by the great dramatist at last approaches him; and, if he thus approach him, he finds the whole world of action and emotion mirrored in these plays and all varieties of human experience. Especially does he find all his own moods and potentialities, his own dangers, audacities, escapes, failures, and triumphs. Any such man could write his own innermost autobiography in moods and in passages from Shakespeare. For the poet is as fresh and human in his boundless, cloudless human view as if he had written only for your own particular instruction and revelation of yourself.

"It is this quality that sets him in a class by himself. His subject-matter is unchanging. It is fairly startling to think that nothing has happened these three centuries that has made a single character in these plays stale. Most governments have changed. Great populations have grown up on continents that were wastes; science has applied itself to many practical revolutions and it has infinitely widened men's vision. Systems of philosophy have come and gone; thinking men have completely readjusted themselves to the universe and to one another. None of these great events, which have changed almost everything else, has changed the infinite variety or staled the charm of these stories of human action and emotion. Nor has any other man ever used so prodigious or far-reaching a vocabulary or forged so many phrases of immortal finality.

"By the joy we get out of Shakespeare, then, we may measure ourselves accurately. Have you morbid moods? They cannot survive your communion with his vast, healthful mind, and your relation to life will swing back to sanity and cheerfulness by his help. Have you a taste for degeneracy in literature? He will not please you till he cure you. Then you will be well again, in fact. There is no other measure so good of our intellectual health and balance and toleration as the degree to which we enjoy this master's great craftsmanship.

"Mr. Gollancz has reminded us that, for these reasons, there is more nearly a unanimity of opinion and feeling among all nations about Shakespeare's dramas than about anything else in the world; and more nearly all the world will unite in celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of his death than would unite in celebrating anything else. No other literature makes so wide an appeal. No religion or philosophy or social or economic or political creed and no hero commands such unhesitating admiration of men of all nations and all races. The educated class in all languages know him; and in all English- and German-speaking lands he is a part of the common speech of all men, learned and unlearned. No other writer has so broken over the barriers of language and race and nationality and philosophy and religion as this most nearly universal of all the sons of men.

"But it would be mere pendantry even for a scholar to undertake to appraise Shakespeare, and for a layman it would be an impertinence. Yet every man has the privilege of enjoying him and of paying him the tribute of a boundless gratitude. It is with a boundless gratitude that, as the spokesman of the largest community of the English-speaking world, I ask you to fill your glasses —you who bring the homage of so many great nations— and, in this village and on this day, both made sacred by his birth and by his death, drink to the Immortal Memory of William Shakespeare."

Soon after Page returned from Stratford the London "season" began in earnest. Its social activities furnished more opportunities for this transplanted Jeffersonian.

To the President

American Embassy London,
May 21, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

At this season, as you know, everybody comes to London; the King gives his levees and his courts and his balls and the rich and the high and the climbing exercise on the social ladder and trapeze; the ambassadors dine one another and other great folk; American ladies come over to be presented; hundreds of people drink Mrs. Page's tea every Thursday afternoon (on July 4th they come 3,000 strong) and we are supposed to have lots of fun; and the funny part of it is, we do! I hear more gossip, get more points of view, see more people, get closer to my colleagues than at any other time of year. I dine with everybody, from the King down—this whole Babylon goes on a tear! Mrs. House and Mrs. Hugh Wallace, for examples, forgetting republican simplicity, will be here to go with us to the Palace. Seriously, it's a fine show—to see once or twice. I am very, very sorry that McAdoo couldn't come. I had a place for your daughter in "the diplomatic circle," and she would have enjoyed it. I told Jessie[1] that she made a bad mistake in marrying at the wrong time of year! I let the oldish ladies go hang: I like young ones about me.

Old cocks like Bryce and Morley go about in gaudy uniforms. I said to Lord Bryce the other night as I surveyed his elaborate gold lace: "You're fine enough to take an LL.D. from the University of Nevada." He told me that Oxford is about to give him a D.Litt. I didn't tell him that on the same occasion Oxford is to give me a D. C. L! (Everybody gets gay, you see.) But the old fellow did say something really worth while when he took luncheon with me yesterday:

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[1] Mrs. Francis Bowe Sayre, the President's recently married daughter.

"I want to say to you—I don't think I've ever said so to you—Wilson did a most brave thing most eloquently and moved up the standard of international courage when he asked for the repeal of the Panama tolls clause. That was noble."

And, after a pause—"What an escape we all had from that unspeakable man, Clark."[1]

"You mean from T. R.," I said: "Clark could never have been elected."

And now we go back into mourning for the Duke of Argyll—mourning that was intermitted for five days during the Danish festivities. We mourn and riot by court order; and, if Champ Clark knew this, you wouldn't blame him for thinking that Ambassadors had better be abolished.

Yet, in spite of our "seasonable" gaiety, I do assure you (and it never leaves me) that there's a sadness in this Old-World life that in certain moods weighs heavily on a man who has been bred to a hopeful outlook on the future, and on a sympathetic man whatever his outlook. I have given you glimpses of what the aristocratic dowagers tell me: you'd expect this from old women of pampered families. But it tinges all English life. The Dowager Lady T. sat in a garden where I was spending Sunday twenty miles out of London—she's a vigorous, handsome, perfectly sincere fine lady of sixty, younger than many women at forty—and she said:

"What would you do and what would you wish your son to do if you were me? My husband's family has had a seat in the House of Lords for 600 years. My son sits there now—literally 'sits,' for a peer can now do nothing else. All their power has been taken away. They are robbing us of our property. When they can they will abolish the monarchy itself. The King knows that his house is doomed. England and the Empire of which we have been so proud—their glory is in the past." Tears came into the old lady's eyes and she said, "Let's walk and talk of something else."

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[1] Mr. Champ Clark, Speaker of the House and Mr. Wilson's most formidable competitor for the Democratic nomination in 1912.

The Duchess of S. told me last night again that if there should be a fight in Ulster she was ready in three hours to have nurses on the way and that the Duke would at once go and fight. (He's six feet four inches.)

"They are robbing us, these devils," and her great diamond necklace seemed to spit fire.

The Liberals, too, are sad. A real victory is so hard to win. Sir Edward Grey carries a philosophic sadness in his manner. The Prime Minister talks like a man who would be glad to be relieved of the whole struggle and to get a little rest before he dies. Donald,[1] the editor of the really only Liberal morning paper in London, complains to me: "We can't get the fighting help we need. If a man puts up money for any of our causes, damn him, he wants a title in return." A member of Parliament brought in a bill the other day to abolish hereditary titles—amid general laughter: and a Conservative twitted him thus: "You're tired of making Liberal peers and have them become Conservative—eh?"

They're all sad—both sides. The machine that confers titles, gives social distinctions, confers orders, gives out sinecures, appoints men to livings and doles out many other such alms and uniforms, captures the ambitious women and the rich men; and the poor devil who can get none of these things pays the bill. If he knows that he is

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[1] Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*.

"worked," he can hardly hope for relief in his lifetime, and he goes sadly on, doing the best he can and drinking the King's health as an expression of pride in the Empire. Yet they are all a vigorous race. Else they'd be in real despair permanently. The mills of the gods and of Lloyd George grind slowly.

Yet all this sadness is hilarity in comparison with the note of weary resignation that I think I detect in such men as the very cultivated Greek Minister,[1] the Rumanian Minister,[2] the Austrian Ambassador,[3] and especially the foxy but melancholy old Benckendorff of Russia. They, I think, having got some glimpses of the free world, carry with them a real hopelessness. But even this English life would depress me if I had to adjust myself to it permanently.

I was talking about this the other night to Lady X. I said frankly that I thought the Englishmen ought to leave our American ladies alone—we need them ourselves!

"And what nationality do you suppose I am?" she asked.

"Great Heavens! are you, too, an American?"

"Certainly.

"And you wouldn't have your children marry here?" she asked.

I told her, "No," because of the underlying sadness of it. The wife of the Argentine Minister (herself from Kentucky!) said to me afterward, "You are very, very right: all the sunlight falls on the New World."

It is weighted—heavily, all this Old World.

"Do you look at us through economic glasses?" asked Lord Milner.

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[1] M. Jean Gennadius.

[2] M. Nicolas Misu.

[3] Count Albert Mensdorff.

"I do and—am sad."

"Well, you may be," said he. "My friend, keep your hopeful mood and pray that your country may never get old—as it will."

Heaven forgive me (and I hope you will, too) for so long a letter. But 'tis true, the sunlight falls on our New World. Here we are very gay but—in the shadow.

Always faithfully yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
9 June, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Just now it has been Their Majesties' "Courts," two of them on two successive evenings. Since this is the last such splendid mediæval thing left in the world, it has an historical interest in addition to being a first-class show; and I'm glad to find myself young and simple enough really to enjoy it. It's the crowning act of the royal social system—most admirably staged and managed. You walk a mile along halls and across picture galleries and drawing rooms and through the throne room till you come to your waiting place, the diplomatic corps in one room and the common herd (of hundreds of ladies) in another, passing on your way gaudy pikemen of pre-Elizabethan England by every door and stairway, and greeted by gentlemen-and-ladies-in-waiting at every turn—beautiful women and inexpressibly gaudy men in white silk stockings and breeches and gold-laced coats. The King and Queen are so punctual that you might set your watch by them. The Lancers and the Indian bodyguard take their places in front; at exactly

9:30 you hear the fanfare, the orchestra plays "God Save the King," and their royalties enter, the gold-stick, the silver-stick, and the rest backing before them. A dozen of the royal family follow, all taking their places on the raised dais, a gold-embroidered and gold-fringed rug on it, and the great canopy over them that was brought from the Durbar. When all the attendants have taken their places, the ladies of the diplomatic corps go in, one by one, the ambassadorial ladies first. The mediæval attendants straighten out their trains, and with feathers in their hair,—the North American Indians wore Eagle feathers, these ladies, ostrich feathers, allee samee at the bottom!—they march in, in due order, of course, according to the period of their service.

It made no matter last night that Mrs. Page and the German ambassadress were discussing the proper bringing-up of babies. When the bugles sounded they had to fall into line and to sit with the Spanish ambassadress between them to the postponement of baby-lore. Each curtseys to the King, then to the Queen, and goes to her proper place. Then follow the Ambassadors, each with a secretary (once a year with his full staff), each bows to the King and to the Queen and marches to his place. The diplomatic corps all in, their royalties sit and the great ladies all sit—the diplomatic ladies on one side the throne in rows according to rank and the duchesses on the other side. All the men and the ladies of no high rank stand for two mortal hours while the stream of presentées flows by—in trains and with feathers and jewels, every one making her obeisance. The King and the Queen nod—that's all. But everyone has been admitted to the royal presence; that's the game, you see, and when you've done that you've won—won over the 38,000,000 other persons who are not on that evening so admitted. The orchestra plays softly. The uniforms and the jewels make any opera-scene pale into sheer make-believe; the tiaras and the coronets sparkle everywhere, and the "creations" of all the great frock-makers flow along—"The liquefaction of her clothes." The Ambassadors, all gaudier than gold and colours ever before made men—all but me in my distinguished waiter-black—stand a little to the left of the throne and carry on whispered conversations with one another and the gentlemen-in-attendance and the princes. The long procession goes on for nearly two hours. Meantime you can pick up a lot of knowledge that, but for this experience, you would have died without gaining. For instance, no two women curtsey alike, and most of them do it very badly. And you couldn't ever know how many pounds of silver and gold and pearls and diamonds a woman can carry till you have seen these. Now and then one trips. Now and then the lady behind steps on the train of the one before her—three and a half yards long, you know.

The music and the procession continue. Meantime the ladies in the diplomatic corps who were born Americans —she of Holland, she of the Argentine, and of the King's attendants, the wife of the Master-of-the-Horse and several others, have all managed to whisper to me their pride in "our compatriots." The Spanish Ambassador keeps reminding me that I must point out the American ladies to him as they pass. Old John Burns[1] stands just across the way in more gilt than any but a strong working man could carry. The American wife of a member of the Cabinet and two American duchesses have as glaring coronets as anybody.

And the procession goes on. The Master-of-the-Horse wants to make a wager with me that the American polo team will beat the English. That's too much for the Queen's brother, who overhears him, and I egg them on to bet with one another. A retired soldier—about eighty-five—who is Master-of-Something, being stiff in one knee himself, calls my attention to an old lady in the line who can't curtsey, evidently because she has a cork leg. Presently a comely woman in the line kneels before the King and with outstretched hands begins her suffragette plea: "Your Majesty, for God's sake——" She got no further for two of the gentlemen-in-waiting grasped her, one on either side, and marched her out. The King gave no sign of even having seen her, but the Queen became very red. But the procession moved on without interruption. There were people in the room who didn't know that anything had happened. This show is perhaps the best managed, best mannered show in the whole world.

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[1] Labour member for Battersea, 1892–1918; President of the Local Government Board, 1905–1914; President of the Board of Trade, 1914.

The Master of Ceremonies asks me to take out to supper the handsome Belgian countess who presides over the Belgian Legation; and about this time the last lady in the line comes along. The orchestra God-Saves-the-King again; the King takes the Queen's hand and the pages take her train, and the gold-stick and the silver-stick back off; their Majesties bow to the Ambassadors and the ambassadorial ladies, the Queen curtseying, then to the duchesses, then to the Ministers; we all bow back. Every other royal person follows their example; and thus, after we have all limbered up ourselves with much bowing we ourselves proceed to the stand-up diplomatic supper room, in due order, of course. Her Belgian Excellency's train caught on the bench and for half a minute the whole company stood in respectful immobility till we passed along in our proper order—along half a mile (so it always seems) of gazing ladies who all wait till we have gone by. Then near the supper-room door are the gentlemen-and-ladies-in-waiting, who again bow to us. We do not see the royal folk again—except at a ball. Then they come into supper with us and go around and talk. I look across the room and see Mrs. Page with the old Turk![1] Neither commands a language that the other speaks, and here's a comedy to make a dog laugh. But they've been through this before. The wily old Moslem is not easily outdone. They both talk at once in any scrap of any language they happen to hit on and they each laugh at the other and have a good time.

"I'm getting really fond of old Tewfik," Mrs. Page says; and old Tewfik says to me that she's—I think he says—"very gracious," for one word's French and the other Tartar, so far as I know.

Thus it goes in this polyglot, international lottery. Meantime we are eating the King's sandwiches or quail or peaches or what-not and (if you wish to) drinking his champagne (not being in the United States Navy). And it's a pretty interesting company that lingers there—men and women from all the earth and members of the Government and army men and navy men. The new Governor of South Africa wants us to spend Sunday with him before he sails; the Norwegian Minister hopes we'll come to his daughter's wedding; the Cuban Minister bows low and swears his island is doing finely; the Chinese Minister has a compliment for my speech on Shakespeare! The German Ambassador says, "You're just putting off the efil day in Mexico."

"Well," say I, "what better can you do with an evil day than to put it off?"

Then he delivers to me that elementary barbarity of the survival of the fittest. The Earl of X. apologizes for the clerk who put my party at the Derby race in the wrong box—I wouldn't give a fig for any horse-race ever run (one horse can run faster than another: everybody knows that, and I don't care at all which is the faster)—but I use my privilege of a box to send a lot of Americans who come here just to see it. An American's horse, you know, won the race this year, and American stock went up. Well, I forgive the Earl and tell him how I enjoyed his great ball whither I went with my daughter and took the dowager Duchess of X. down to supper and wept over the decline of the British Empire—till we forgot it in our mutual detestation of the tango. It's sometimes amazing how your emotions run the whole scale in one short half-hour. I encounter another maid-of-honour, but Mrs. Page says it's time to go home. As I walk down the long picture gallery I encounter an American woman who brought a fortune here and married a high title, and she tells me confidentially that she's trying to marry the rich American girl that we see in front of us to the young Duke of ——. I venture to advise her to let the young lady alone: she can find a husband for herself.

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[1] Tewfik Pasha, Turkish Ambassador to Great Britain.

"My dear compatriot," she says to me, "it is delicious to see how touchingly simple you yet are."

That "yet" rather got my tag, as the old hussy meant it should. Further down the hall I bow to one of the American duchesses—the Americans are everywhere, Americans of all sorts, from twenty-four karat to tinsel; and when I reach the door the Mexican Minister is getting in his car. The red-coated door-man yells, "The American Ambassador," and presently we are driving home.

My son, who is a North Carolina farmer, having for one night exchanged his ploughman's corduroy for dark green velvet and hose and silver-buckled slippers, draws a long breath as we pass out the palace gate at midnight and breaks forth: "Mother, it comes high on Daddy, but that show's worth all it costs!"

And next week a court ball! Royalty, ambassadors and their wives, and persons as low down as dukes are permitted to dance in the royal quadrille. That done, anybody can dance, except when the Queen takes a spin or two. Everybody stops when she dances. Well, we dance and talk and look on and mix up in good country fashion till supper-time. House—solemn House—will have none of this; but I'm going to take Mrs. House, to her keen enjoyment. The very next morning I put on my dress suit, eat breakfast, and go to St. James's to a levee, where the King receives gentlemen only. I shake hands with him and stand near by, my opera hat under my arm while to the music of the Coldstream band about six hundred and thirty-seven gentlemen are introduced, each bowing and passing along—dukes, earls, viscounts, baronets, bishops, judges with big wigs, generals, admirals, lower officers, rajahs, colonials come for the purpose from New Zealand or Canada or the Soudan—every man in a uniform or a gown or a blue-velvet suit and a tin sword, every one, too, with his hat or cap in his hand. Sometimes a lame old soldier or a bishop loses his way and whirls about till he bumps into me. A lord-in-waiting pulls him off and begs my pardon and hopes that I am not hurt. The King smiles, and nods to the next-comer. And so *that* show goes. Again we are bowed to and bow, and find our way out, discussing the fate of Albania on our way. As each man-jack of us gets in his car he bids an effusive good-bye to those that are waiting for their slower chauffeurs. The King drives back to Buckingham Palace in his gilt carriage-and-four attended by a helmeted troop of cavalry.

Do you know that all this is an amazingly interesting study—how far it is all done consciously, as a method of drawing fresh recruits to the royal-aristocratic point-of-view—how far it is consciously staged and managed so as to appeal to the national and historical imagination? Of course, if the Liberal programme is ever carried out—as, of course, it will be in time—there will come a day when royalty will appear superfluous. If in the meantime royalty links itself to all the splendour of English history and continues its spectacular appeal to every woman of social ambition, the evil day may be postponed—especially for royalty that lead decent lives, as these do. Lloyd George and John Burns go to Court. Practically every woman in the Kingdom wants to be "presented." Most men want titles. I heard a good story the other day: a man who has Conservative leanings but is not a violent partisan offered to give $150,000 to the Committee on the Hundred Years' Peace[1] if the man on the Committee whom he approached would induce the Government to give him a title. Objection was made to his Conservative leaning. "Well," said he, "I've looked into that. I can never hope for anything from my own party—I'll not live long enough. They already have promised as many titles as they can give for five years after they come into power again."

There's no organization ever devised by man for its own perpetuity so admirably unless it be the Roman Church. The King works hard for more than half the year—amazingly hard; he leads a regular life. He grinds away at his job with an appearance of toil. The Conservatives openly accuse the Liberals of such an ultimate purpose as the abolition of royalty. Everybody agrees that an indiscreet or openly dissolute King would come to grief.

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[1] The proposed plan—rudely interrupted by the World War—to celebrate the century of peace between Great Britain and the United States.

The Bishops know that the State Church will one day pass. Hence they fight like tigers to keep it in Wales. But all these things yet rest on a pretty solid foundation, so long as everything goes well—namely the vanity of women and the haughtiness of privileged men. It's a most interesting game. And isn't it funny that I must now end this letter in order to go and put on my knee-breeches for the Court Ball at Buckingham Palace to-night?

Yours most heartily,
Walter H. Page.

For the President

American Embassy,
London.

Notes on the English Revolution

. . . At dinner to-night (only Conservative guests besides Mrs. Page and me) I sat next the Countess of H——, a good-natured, cultivated woman who has seen much of the world.

"I've dropped all my friends in that crew,"[1] she said. "Not one would I invite to my house."

"Even the King dallies with the democracy," said a noble lord to me the other day, "instead of standing erect and using his prerogative and vetoing the Home Rule bill when it is passed. His Peers stand by him and he ought to stand by them." If he were to dare veto the bill, from all that I hear, that would be the beginning of the end.

The ferocity of this contest passes belief. The privileged classes know that they are fighting for their lives and they are scornful and desperate to the last degree.

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[1] Meaning members of the Liberal Government.

This same Countess of H—— said, "We've soon got to have a general election, you know."

"Well," said I, "suppose the Liberals carry the election?"

"God would not so punish our great Empire," shouted the Marquis across the table; "do you think He would?"

They talked of the pride they had all felt in the Empire and bewailed its discrediting in the world and its poor plight if this thing goes on. Old Lord Halsbury, the great law-Lord (aged 88), said to me the other day, "When you release a dull, heavy body down a steep incline, nothing can stop it till it reach the bottom. His Majesty himself will be abolished if this thing keeps on."

On the other side there is the same determined spirit. Lloyd George insults them nearly every day. The Prime Minister, now in sore straits, means and sees revolution—peaceful, of course, but progressive; and in private conversation talks with great frankness. These are the two most popular men in the kingdom. It is war—so far without bloodshed, but they shed everything else! Of course, it's folly to make predictions, but this much seems clear: they ever come nearer to the American point of view. If this kingdom ever become a Republic, of course ours will remain the foremost Republic in the world.

W. H. P.

In June Congress passed the Panama Canal bill repealing the clause exempting American coastwise shipping from the payment of tolls. This reversal of national policy was a great triumph for President Wilson and for Page, who had been advocating it for months purely as a question of national honour. Congress, however, added an amendment to the new bill that for a brief period caused much dismay. In this amendment the announcement was made that the United States did not relinquish its rights to exempt American ships from the payment of tolls. President Wilson had contended that, because of existing treaties with Great Britain, we possessed no such right. The amendment, therefore, clearly asserting such a right, and repealing the exemption rather as an act of grace, produced an unfortunate impression in England. This amendment seemed to contain an intimation or even a threat, that at some future time the unpopular measure might be restored to the statute book. Page, however, took the view that it was not practically important.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
5 July, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I'm sometimes driven almost to despair of the newspapers, even of those that we think of as the most careful. For instance, here comes this great triumph of the repeal of the offensive Panama tolls discrimination, which, so far as I know, is an unparalleled achievement—to make a big legislative body reverse itself. That perfectly meaningless, asinine amendment receives a degree of attention in the Washington dispatches to the London papers that is discouraging. They pretend that it somehow weakens the repeal and that it shows (somehow, God knows how) that the President's power is weakening. It seems to me to be the very strongest evidence of the President's personal power, and incidentally it filled the floors of the Capitol with corpses: Clark—he's as dead as Hector. And consider the mortality in the Senate!

The enemies of the President and the professional enemies of Great Britain all ranged themselves bravely and—fell. Yet they call it a grudging victory.

Well, I drove down to Northcliffe's country house today (he owns the *Times*, the *Daily Mail*, etc., etc., etc.); and after I had admired Lady Northcliffe's seven gardens and we had finished luncheon, I took Northcliffe off into his library. I pictured this drawn battle to him and pointed out the slaughter and reminded him that nobody before had ever dared all these anti-British influences to assemble themselves and have it out, and I showed him the dead on the field.

"In God's name, Northcliffe, if this isn't victory, what would your Washington correspondent call a victory? Tell me frankly, what's the matter?"

He didn't know, really hadn't noticed it, would look it up, etc. Queer lot, these fellows. Yet they do see the victory; they are impressed; they are grateful; they do admire you—all in their slow, dumb way, but they stick at that amendment. Why was it put there if it means nothing? They constantly do precisely such tricks in Parliament; but when somebody else does such a trick, they suspect some nigger in the woodpile. But this will pass[1]—will probably be buried in next week's *Spectator*.

Sir Edward Grey (I think I wrote you) said some time ago that he had it in mind to make an important speech in the House of Commons, when the repeal had passed the Senate, on "How Great Governments Should Behave to One Another," using this repeal as his text. I'll see him to-morrow and I'll say to him: "Isn't it time we were getting our big speech ready?" Alas! it's a sad day in Parliament for anything but Ireland and Ulster and the militant suffragettes. It's a dog-fight from day to day, with only grimness to commend it. It was once interesting: it's now only gloomy and tiresome. I dined with the Prime Minister a few nights ago and I brought away from a long talk with him the feeling that he doesn't know what a week or a month may bring forth. Nor did Mrs. Asquith illumine the situation greatly when she whispered to me: "We have too many damned fools"—a perfectly safe if not a perfectly ladylike generalization. If there's a street brawl in Belfast, they'll call it civil war and the whole world will be shocked—Germany shocked with joy. And, of course, that may happen any day. Hence they think less of tolls and Mexico than usual, which makes it a good time for me to try to correct them. But don't let me leave an unfair impression on your mind about their appreciation of the tolls repeal. They do appreciate it, but that amendment for the moment confuses them. The common Englishman is a grave beast. He takes things *so* solemnly!

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[1] In fact, it is already passed. (W. H. P.'s note.)

I'm trying to help House[1] and I'm going to make him help me in these matters. Sir Edward Grey is coming in two days to lunch with me; he, House, Tyrrell, and I.[2] Then his series of conferences will begin. Sir Edward is wholly sympathetic; he will be even enthusiastic. I know my man. But how powerful he will be—we'll see. He's a sad man these days: after eight years of hard and lonely toil in his present office, the crow's feet by his eyes, he sees the Liberal Party in a most difficult neck and shoal of time, all its old enemies at its throat. A lonely idealist, Sir Edward; sometimes I think him as grim as a Puritan; sometimes I think him half afraid of his own intellectual processes. The revolution comes so hard and must be so desperately fought for, and it is so slow, and the tools it must be won with so dull. I'm glad we haven't that particular job.

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[1] At this time Colonel House was in Europe in the interest of general arbitration and peace. See Volume I, Chapter IX.

[2] This luncheon is described in Volume I, Page 299.

The Die Hards do die hard; and the Liberals lack, not courage, but buoyancy. They seem hacked, weary, worn to a frazzle; and I'm beginning to see how hard and slow their task is. These people are *set*. They naturally shrink from changing anything; they instinctively resent change. A naval man told me that after breech-loading guns were invented, they kept the muzzle-loaders ten years; arguing meantime that no breech-loading gun could possibly be accurate.

Since I started this letter, the *Spectator* has done what I heard it would do. See the enclosed article, which no doubt was telegraphed. See also the *Pall Mall* clipping. I enclose, too, Sir Edward's speech—the part of it about the Panama tolls. I promptly thanked him and, as I telegraphed you, he seemed pleased that it pleased you.

He told me this: that, when the repeal of the tolls clause passed the Senate, he wished to send instructions to his Embassy at Washington to thank you, but he feared that if news of such an act on his part should get out it might embarrass you. I told him that I would convey his appreciation to you.

I hear talk about it wherever I go. Bryce made a good speech about it last night at the Fourth of July dinner of the American Society. I dined with the London County Council: it was praised there. It has cleared the atmosphere here wonderfully and made it possible for you to make any demands that you would make on this government.—And there's nothing now on the docket.

Very heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

Sunday, July 12, 1914,
Panshanger, Hertford,
England.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

It may please you to learn that the approach of Mexican affairs toward a solution along the lines of your thought and effort is perceived even here, in spite of the hitherto prevalent British opinion that your "idealistic" programme was bound to fail. A few days ago one of the "City"(as we should say, Wall Street) men who has big investments in Mexico—a man, not of the Cowdray group—informed me that he had authentic information that a solution was at hand. He undoubtedly receives accurate commercial information from Mexico constantly by cable. How trustworthy his political information and judgment are I can only guess. But he surely did not expect what he now hears has taken place—that Huerta's elimination and the setting up of a government to which both factions agree are imminent. I promptly informed Sir Edward Grey of what this man had told me, and Sir Edward read me a telegram that he had just received from Carden which looked in the same direction, tho' it didn't look so far. Meantime, I notice a subsidence of apprehension in the atmosphere of London political life. A little while ago Carden had this government scared about what was sure to happen in Mexico City—the cutting of the water supply and the light wire, the murder of foreigners, the sacking of the city, etc., etc. These things were going to happen overnight. I manage to get Sir Edward to tell me more or less of what Carden telegraphs; and in the last week or two his dispatches have become far less panicky. If he keep cooling down for a few weeks more, he will reach a normal temperature.

House is happy, having sent his letter to the Kaiser,[1] and he is now enjoying himself. I told Sir Edward Grey what House had written and he was pleased.

"Good as far as it goes," said he, "and I don't see how he could have gone further."

But Grey is greatly disturbed over the danger that comes of the Servian unrest against Austria. Both Russia and Germany are mobilizing on the South. The infernal near-Eastern country is worse than Mexico. I have heard no more gossip about our sale of ships to Greece.[2] The Greek Minister smiles and bows every time I see him, with a peculiar unctuousness.

It's a long way from these troubled subjects to this quiet great house of the Cowper family, where with the Speaker of the House and Lord Rayleigh and divers other lords and ladies, we are spending Sunday. A dozen Lord Cowpers hang in the library, and every one has added to the famous pictures in the gallery and to the books in the library, till both are famous for their riches. They thought they built forever, these old nobles, and I'm not sure but they did build for at least a very long time to come. Wherever any branch of the family may live, and they live all over the world, they never forget the ancestral seat and the sons of younger sons of many generations come back to visit it and to be entertained. This, I think, is the strongest force that binds the colonies to the mother country. Of such a house comes one of the greatest physicists in the world[3] (who is a sort of politician too); and of such houses come great admirals and generals and administrators. The aristocracy is here and it isn't effete by a long shot. If it prove to be teachable, it will rule for many a long year. On some sides it seems dense. But if you take a peer to be a fool, you'll find out your mistake in a day or two's talk at the short range you get in a country-house party. He'll tell you more than you know about artists and cows and foreign lands and chemistry and rainfall in India, and he'll beat you riding, shooting, golfing, or at tennis and—in the evening at poker, if you wish; and after intelligent talk about theology, he'll swear at Lloyd George in a way that a cowboy would admire. His lady wears too many diamonds for the simple taste of a democrat, but she wouldn't hesitate a moment to sell every one of them to help Ulster if she thought Ulster needed such help; and her sons and brothers are in all English-speaking lands, never forgetful of the old home.

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[1] See Volume I, Chapter IX.

[2] In July, 1914, the American Government sold the battleships *Idaho* and *Mississippi* to Greece. For the details, see "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story," Chapter III.

[3] Lord Rayleigh, O. M.

Great human societies are the most interesting subjects of study in the world—aren't they? We speak about hospitality: we don't know the A B C of this fine art. These great Englishmen practise it on their fellows till it takes rank with painting, architecture, and literature. They had a pageant the other day at the sleepy old town of Hertford, whence Hartford, Connecticut, was settled, a pageant that showed 1,000 years of the history of the town. Men from Connecticut were invited. Lady Salisbury invited Mrs. Page and me to Hatfield, the Salisburys' country home, itself nearly half a thousand years old. There we found the Connecticut folk. Then we went to Hertford, to the town hall, for luncheon. Lord Salisbury is "Lord Steward" of the town—an hereditary honorary office. As Lord Steward he spoke. His cousin, Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, began his public career forty years ago as member of the House for Hertford, and they presented him with the freedom of the town in a handsome silver casket; and so on. Then, two nights later Lord and Lady Salisbury entertained in their London house (read "palace") the hundreds of delegates from thirty or more countries to a Congress of Home and Town Planners and Builders; and in a little speech of welcome Lord Salisbury showed that he knew what every country was doing in this new movement.

On the intervening night he gave a great ball in honour of his daughter's "coming out." Such were three days of one nobleman's activities that I happened to witness. He's as nice and modest a fellow in his manner as if he were a simple country squire. If you think that this sort of a man is done for because he's a Tory, you don't know the breed. Two of his brothers sit in the House while he sits in the Lords, and their sister, Lady Selborne, holds meetings in favour of woman suffrage! There's no airy-fairy fluffiness about her; and her husband, who has been First Lord of the Admiralty, stirs all England by his speeches for an efficient navy. Of course, the other side's interesting, too, and eternally right and untactful. I enjoyed an amusing momentary prominence the other night by reason of their lack of tact. When the House met at nine, the Opposition haughtily inquired where the Prime Minister was "at this important juncture." One of the Cabinet explained that he had an imperative engagement with the Ambassador of a foreign country.

"What important engagement can keep him from the House when this critical measure is up for discussion?" one asked. And then another: "I understand that the Prime Minister is dining with the American Ambassador—that is his 'imperative engagement.' For the American Ambassador I have the greatest respect. I should feel greatly honoured to dine with him myself, but the seductions of His Excellency's hospitality should not detain the Rt. Hon. gentleman at this critical hour in the House." [Laughter.] And the House adjourned because Mr. Asquith was dining with me! My dinner list will have to be enlarged because I invited the Prime Minister to come and talk with House. Don't you see how these Special Envoys get the Regular Force into trouble?

Special envoys are now numerous from San Francisco. One wants the British Navy to patrol the sea from Iceland to Scotland when the aviators from the Fair fly around the world; another wants me to go with him to see the King to persuade His Majesty to send a bull from his herd to the Fair; and they all bring enigmatical vague credentials from the State Department asking my "coöperation." When I telegraph to the Department asking if I am authorized by it to ask for this service from the British Navy, I am told No, but that I may use my "personal good offices." My personal good offices don't move the British Navy, and I think I won't try them on the King's bull. But one of these days I pray Heaven I may have time to describe the comedies of this ambassadorial life. The sheer juxtaposition of events makes one smile. To-morrow I must unveil a picture of McKinley, and the next day a church window to Pocahontas and I have just received news that Booker Washington is coming, none of which is as good a show as a Buffalo-Bill kind of exhibition now given here as showing "the real life of the United States." At least we'll not die from ennui.

Yours heartily,
Walter H. Page.

CHAPTER III

VEXATIONS OF AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR

IT MUST not be assumed, from the foregoing comments on the British social and political system, that the life of the American Ambassador was exclusively devoted to agreeable living, congenial labour, and philosophical observation. It had distinctly its unpleasant side. Much as Page admired democratic institutions, there was one expression of democracy with which he could not sympathize. One illusion disappeared in the first few months of his English sojourn. Like most Americans he had heard much of the great regard which Great Britain entertained for the American ambassadorial service. He soon discovered that only in a personal sense was this impression well founded. Certain American Ambassadors—though by no means all—had made great reputations. The American Ambassador occupied an exceptional position amid the representatives of foreign powers, due to the fact that he spoke the English language and represented a country that found its institutional and racial roots in Britain. The long-settled British policy of maintaining the friendliest relations with the United States likewise gave the American representative something of a favoured position. His country also was detached from Europe and its political intrigues and jealousies; causes of violent controversy between Great Britain and the United States seldom arose in peace times; and so an American Ambassador, endowed—as practically all of them for at least half a century have been—with amiability, culture, intelligence, and tact, almost never had unpleasant experiences at the Foreign Office. Not unnaturally, therefore, the American Ambassador in London was a man apart, the special object of general attention and regard. Yet, from the professional standpoint, the American diplomatic service was hardly looked upon seriously. For generations this country had selected Ministers and Ambassadors too frequently on political grounds; it had developed no consistent foreign policy and no diplomatic traditions; it had made the most niggardly financial provision for the support of embassies and had not given its representatives permanent and dignified habitations. The evidences that the American people had little interest in this phase of American activity were abundant; reports even came across the ocean that certain Presidential candidates and other conspicuous statesmen were advocating the abolition of Ambassadors as useless and outworn remnants of mediævalism. A survey of the conditions under which Ambassadors performed their work might make one reasonably ask whether the views of Mr. Champ Clark did not represent the nation's attitude.

Page was an especially well-informed American; his interest in American diplomacy had always been keen; yet he was himself surprised at the barren circumstances of his arrival in London. For thirty years the "Chancery" of the American Embassy had been a dingy little flat in Victoria Street. That was the only permanent American diplomatic establishment in the British capital. There was no dignified building, in a respectable location, known as the "American Embassy." Since the days of Thomas Pinckney, our first Minister to Great Britain, our representatives had lived in a succession of houses.

The very variety—some extremely plain and simple, others fairly gorgeous—was in itself hardly in keeping with the democratic idea. Why should one Ambassador of a great democracy, where all men were supposedly equal, live in an unpretentious house in an obscure square, and his successor occupy what was virtually a palace? The majority of American Ambassadors, it is true, have lived with dignity and even elegance—most of them, indeed, have been rich men; but that likewise was a violation of the democratic principle, for it apparently meant that only rich men could aspire to these posts. This, however, was not its most serious aspect. The lack of a fixed home was a distinct diplomatic handicap. Of all desirable qualities the indefinite thing known as "prestige" is perhaps the most important in foreign relations. The fact that the American Ambassador, as soon as he reached London, became a house-hunter, hardly added to his impressiveness. This absence of a permanent headquarters seemed a clear indication that Americans knew nothing about foreign affairs and cared nothing about them. "Till we have such an established building," wrote Page, "they'll regard us as mean and stingy and given to queer freaks; they like *us* [that is, the American people] but they don't know what to think of our government. . . . Our government they don't trust or admire." The English people had another explanation, also not especially flattering to our national pride. That the American Government could not afford a respectable diplomatic establishment was preposterous; from a money standpoint, the thing was trifling. The failure to provide one therefore must be the political fear of the Irish vote! In other words, the indifference was a studied insult. The mere reflection that the Government had no embassies in Paris or Berlin or Rome or Madrid—indeed, in few capitals—shows the absurdity of this notion, yet Page was constantly called upon to repudiate it. "It's too bad you're not allowed to have a residence in London," or "I suppose the Irish would object"—such were the sympathetic remarks frequently dropped in his ear. "Is no administration strong enough to do it?" was another question he records.

A part of the same difficulty was the failure of Washington to make a proper allowance for ambassadorial expenses. Only two types of men could perform the duties even on a modest scale: men of wealth, or men, who though not wealthy had, in the course of a busy life, placed aside a modest competence which would suffice for a brief stay. The average American in the United States cannot understand why an Ambassador to Great Britain must spend at least $50,000 a year. Page himself did not understand it until he had lived a few weeks in London. He believed, with most enlightened Americans, that the man was the important thing, not his surroundings; that the American Ambassador could live in the utmost simplicity and still creditably perform his duties. He expressed himself on this subject in February, 1913, two months before President Wilson summoned him to this post. "The wish for a change from merely rich men as Ambassadors and Ministers," he wrote, "has been made in all quarters since the election; and a very proper wish it is. A facetious view of the subject would suggest that most of the democratic gentlemen who wish to represent their country at foreign capitals are poor men. But there is a serious side to it. Of late years it has become almost the rule that the most important ambassadorships should be given to rich men, in some cases because they made big campaign contributions (if not for this reason, for what reason?). In other cases, the expense of maintaining establishments on a level with other nations far outruns the salaries that we pay; and, for this reason, of the men eligible, the rich man has had the preference.

"But, whatever the reason, the gradual and continuous tendency toward richly kept embassies is out of keeping with the American idea. The American idea may, in this matter, properly be called simplicity and efficiency. A plain, dignified house, with a real man in it, is better than a palace with a mere official. Reverdy Johnson, Charles Francis Adams, John Lothrop Motley, James Russell Lowell, Thomas F. Bayard—these are the types of men who have properly and with great distinction represented the United States in European capitals; and they did it right well. The very simplicity of their ways of life—their very poverty, if you choose so to call it—was one important element of their success. It was as much as to say that the United States sent abroad men who were scholars and gentlemen and men-of-letters: it was the man who counted, not the house he lived in, or the servants he hired, or his entertainments. There have, of course, been rich men who were scholars and men of personal charm. But the great old-time distinction of American diplomacy was not the distinction that wealth gave or helped to give.

"There was a movement several years ago to persuade Congress to buy suitable residences for our Ambassadors at the chief European capitals—a worthy move that ought to succeed. The best posts, too, might very well carry larger salaries. We are parsimonious in small matters. But the lack of proper governmental provision is not a sufficient reason for the appointment of men only or mainly because they are rich men. It is a bad day when this shall be true about any public position. No rich man has been elected President since Washington, and no rich man could be. This may not be fair to the rich, but beneath it there runs a rather wholesome quality of American character. Why should any rich man hold a lesser governmental post merely because of riches?"

It is a curious fact that Page himself was almost precisely the type of man he described, with not the slightest consciousness of his impending appointment—scholarly, dignified, with a deep interest and understanding of public questions and his country's position in the world, and, above all, simple in his personal tastes and living habits. He presently had an opportunity for testing his theory that such a man, without a large income, could easily fulfil the ambassadorial post and he quickly discovered that his preconception was wrong. The first four of the distinguished diplomats he mentions—Reverdy Johnson, Charles Francis Adams, John Lothrop Motley, and James Russell Lowell—were not Ambassadors: they were Ministers. Though the traditional distinction between an Ambassador and a Minister has lost much of its force, it is still true that on the ceremonial side the position of an Ambassador is far the more exalted one. He represents his sovereign to the sovereign of the nation to which he is accredited; he ranks in precedence next to the princes of the blood; he is entertained by the King and he also entertains the King, and in all circles he is treated with the same deference that would be shown the ruler of his own country. Possibly this type of functionary is not becoming to a Republic organized on democratic lines. For more than a hundred years the United States maintained this point of view. It refused to appoint Ambassadors, placing its diplomatic interest in the hands of Ministers Resident. These diplomatic agents of the "second rank" had practically the same official powers as Ambassadors; their social position, however, was very different. Page himself, in his entertaining description of a Court at Buckingham Palace, makes it clear that Ambassadors receive far more distinguished treatment than mere Ministers. "The Ambassadors come in first and bow and the King shakes hands with them. Then come the forty or more Ministers—no shake for them."[1] This latter group included men of the eminence of Charles Francis Adams, James Russell Lowell, and John Lothrop Motley, in the days of Queen Victoria. There were many other disadvantages to which Ministers were forced to submit. The consequence was that a Minister could live on a comparatively modest expenditure. As he had no particular position at Court, his outside life was precisely what he chose to make it. A failure to entertain extensively brought no criticism upon himself or his country. But he likewise had to pay the penalty for his inconspicuous manner of life. He did not make the "contacts" that were valuable in the transaction of his country's business. He was forced to sit in the anteroom of the Foreign Secretary while the Ambassadors of nations far less important than his own received preferential treatment. If he dined with the Sovereign it was a special favour due to his personal eminence and not the established right of his position. Naturally the time came when the United States could no longer endure this system, and, in 1893, Congress passed a law permitting the President to raise certain legations to the rank of embassies.

The nation applauded the change, though there was apparently no general appreciation of its meaning. Certainly Congress, when it passed the new ambassadorial act, did not understand its significance. Otherwise it would have adequately provided for the financial obligations of the changed status. An American Minister could live simply, for no great social duties were inevitably laid upon him. James Russell Lowell, for example, maintained a modest establishment in Lowndes Square, and performed the comparatively simple duties of his post, achieving by virtue of his talents and charm a high position in British social and intellectual life. But an Ambassador cannot live with the simplicity of a diplomat of lower rank. Page thought so before he reached London; why such living was impossible his letters show. If the matter were purely one of social display, the criticisms frequently heard in Congress and elsewhere would be justified. But the constant round of dinner parties and country visits are not merely pleasure expeditions; indeed, that is not their prime purpose. That quick transportation and communication have made unnecessary certain functions of an Ambassador is true; he does not constantly have to make decisions on his own responsibility, as in the old days, for the State Department can send immediate instructions; so much basis there is for the theory that the cable and the fast steamship have made the service obsolete. Transmitting documents and discussing problems in the Foreign Office, however, are not the most important of his duties. His value consists in the information he can send of the officials who are conducting the Government with which he is dealing, the state of public opinion, as mirrored not only in the daily and periodical press, but in the minds of influential men. It is his duty to meet these men—and women too, for women play a far more important part in British public life than they do in this country—obtain their views, and report the resultant judgment and observations to Washington. No one has yet discovered any satisfactory method of getting acquainted with human beings except by associating with them. In a great capital like London most important diplomatic business is really transacted over the dinner table. In former times an Ambassador needed to be on good terms only with the Court; now he must know the leaders in all walks of life. He must also know the masses. In this work an Ambassador's wife can be almost as useful as the Ambassador himself; a clever woman, through her friendships, can easily pick up information that may determine national policy. Page's career in London illustrates abundantly the practical value of this social side. "You can't talk with them," he writes, "except at luncheon or dinner—food with talk every time." "I meet the Argentine and Chilean Ministers everywhere, any day—the last time at a big dinner, where we sat in a corner and settled the South and Central American troubles." "This easy way of doing things comes of their having attractive wives who are sought at big social functions." The innumerable occasions when Page discussed Mexico, Panama, and the issues of the war at big houses come out in his letters. How much world history was made by Page's friendship for Sir Edward Grey, based largely upon a community of literary enthusiasms and common conceptions of statecraft, can only be faintly imagined. Many instances could be cited. This is the reason why the maintenance of an embassy in London requires a much greater outlay than the $17,500 salary which the position receives. It is only when this sum is compared with the $85,000 allowed the British Ambassador in Washington that the parsimony of the American Government is apparent. Page explains the situation in his letters to the President, and there need now be no delicacy about printing them, for a public question of vast importance is involved. Mr. John W. Davis, his successor, after his return explained before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs the utter impossibility of maintaining the office, even in unostentatious times, on less than $50,000 a year.[1] In making this public revelation, Mr. Davis has done only what Page himself intended to do. After a year in London, largely at his own expense, Page informed President Wilson that unless a different financial arrangement were made he should resign and come home. "If I have to leave in the fall or in December," he wrote at the same time to Colonel House, "it will be said and thought that I've failed, unless there be some reason that can be made public. I should be perfectly willing to tell the reason—the failure of the Government to make it financially possible."

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[1] Volume I, Page 156.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
June 5, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . I wrote you a letter on Sunday giving my resignation and asking you to have a letter of recall sent to me. But I have decided first to send you this tiresome letter instead—to see, since you are kind enough to wish me to remain here and since I have just reached a place in my adjustment to this task that will, I hope, enable me to be of some real service in the future—to see if some way cannot be found for you to have at least one representative in a great capital who need not be a rich man.

At the risk of wearying you (rather, it is a dead certainty that I shall weary you) I shall try to explain the whole situation. For, looked at from the United States, it seems preposterous that an American Ambassador in

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[1] Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Sixty-eighth Congress, First Session, pages 205–211.

London must have from $45,000 to $50,000 a year properly to do his task. But this is the centre of the world, and the American Ambassador has by far more duties laid on him than all the rest of the Ambassadors here put together. Ambassadors are given precedence over all but royal persons, and this preëminence carries very costly obligations. Everybody in official and in social life offers him entertainment, and some of these entertainments must of course be returned. I have returned perhaps one in five—not more. This is necessary, if for no other reason, to prevent hindering criticism. Every Thursday afternoon from one hundred to two hundred and fifty people call, besides large numbers on other days. These callers are persons in official life, the ruling class in English society, and Americans. A record of them must be kept and calls must be returned. Then there are invitations to dinner, to luncheon, to country houses, palace functions; and every member of the diplomatic corps accepts them in the regular pursuit of his business. In addition to all these the American Ambassador is asked sooner or later to all the cities where the Lord Mayors and Councils entertain him. All these cost. Not a day passes but I am making speeches or taking journeys, short or long, by rail or by motor, trying to interpret our institutions and our life. All these activities are essential, being part and parcel of the better understanding of the two peoples, and warp and woof of our international friendliness. There is no other way to give expression to these close relations.

Then there are thousands of Americans who come here. Presently, for example, the training ships from Annapolis will come to the coast. The commanding officer will call on me. I must go to his ship in return. We must exchange dinners, I inviting certain English admirals to meet him. We may dispense with these things in the United States. If we omitted them here, we should start unfriendly gossip throughout Europe. Again, on any nation's natal day, the London Ambassador opens his house to his compatriots. A few hundred call on the other Ambassadors. On the American, from three thousand to four thousand call. I have to hire a hotel! I have thought of omitting it, but everybody warns me not to do so. There surely would be a howl if I did. The Ambassador is the visible symbol of the United States to these folk.

Now such activities as these are not merely the fashion. They have become fixed by long use and habit. Things of mere fashion I have persistently omitted and disregarded. In other words, a man who is going to be the American Ambassador in London has got to do these and such things. Else he would not represent the United States to these people at all. He could be a clerk and transmit and carry messages to the Foreign Secretary. But he could have no influence on public opinion—could not be a personage in any sense; he could not know the English people, he would not be highly regarded by them, nor could he ever hear or find out such things as I have sometimes written you in my letters.

Of course I have thought all this out. I have thought of omitting most of these things and of taking a small house on a side street and living within my salary. That's possible, and, seen from the United States, it seemed practicable. But it isn't practicable without utterly changing the nature of the task and omitting the most important parts of it. As it is, the United States Government (God knows) is held in contempt enough for not providing its Ambassador with a house. This omission has been flung in my face, I am sure, every day that I have been here. Even in official circles, it is continually held against us. This British Government has a house in Washington and it makes its Ambassador an allowance for various expenses. It is regarded as a poor return compliment that our government has no home here and skimps our Ambassador. They don't like it. Every other country that has an Ambassador here (except the Turkish) owns a house or has a house on a long lease; it has furnished it well; it allows a fund for entertainment. The absence of an embassy here has become a public scandal. As I think of this criminal omission all these years while every town of any size in the United States has got its big post-office building, I feel an almost irresistible impulse to send my letter of resignation without more ado. For men and governments do not waste their money in these ways. And here, in the principal capital of Europe, while France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Japan all have proper homes, costing each from $250,000 to $500,000, we have—nothing; and yet the American Ambassador has to bear his burden and disgrace and to do more duties than all the others put together and—to pay his own bills!

The offices[1] have remained the same for about thirty years. In that time the whole street where they are has become a cheap shopping street—as if they were between two stores down on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. The stores have caused an increase in rental value and made the place less desirable for our uses. The entrance is the same as to the cheap flats above. A little while ago, a woman who lives in one of these flats made a sensation in the courts; and once in a while I have met immodest-looking women in the hall. I have always wished to move these offices. But they have been the one stable thing about our establishment in London. So long as there was hope that a house might be leased for a term of years for the Ambassador, it seemed best to let the offices remain till such a house could be taken and then move them (the offices) also—but not to move them twice.

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[1] The Ambassador is now referring to the so-called Chancery, 123 Victoria St.

During the last fifteen or twenty years living conditions (and the duties laid on the American Ambassador) have greatly changed. In Lowell's day under Queen Victoria's simple reign, a man could live and do his duty on $20,000 to $25,000 a year. But even then Lowell went home poor, and Phelps, I have heard, had a hard time too. Hay was a rich man. Choate (so I have heard since I came here) spent at least $65,000 a year. Henry James, who often comes to my house, the other day told an American lady—in a complimentary way to me—that I was "doing—er the task—er just—just right"—in one of his endless sentences. Not a man in any big capital in Europe, as our Ambassador, gets off, I hear, with less than $50,000, and I suspect that every one spends more. Not an Ambassador in London (again excepting the Turk, who doesn't count) gets off with $50,000 if his house rent were reckoned in. We had as well say, then, that the American Ambassador here—necessarily the most costly of all the diplomatic posts—so long as he has to pay his house rent and all his official entertainment bills, must have at least $50,000, if he do his task creditably.

There has been a curious reversion from a fair start. Isn't it true that Dr. Benjamin Franklin, in France, received $17,000 a year—a great deal more than $17,000 a year now—a grant for official entertaining and a coach and pair? That was before the day of the backwoods Congressman and the professional Irish politician. And to give the Ambassador here and in Mexico the same salary is a ridiculous absurdity. No other government does such a thing.

I have varying moods. As I write this, I feel as I felt last Sunday when I wrote out my resignation—that's the wisest way out of the difficulty; give it up and tell the public the whole truth, that we can have only rich men for Ambassadors—swallow my loss, forget it, and go back to my work and earn my living. Then I have another mood—that it is exceedingly unfortunate to change Ambassadors so often, that I owe it to you to make every even desperate effort not to have to give up for sheer financial reasons. Moreover, I believe, at least in my vainer moments, that I have now made such an adjustment of myself to this task as to warrant the hope of doing it with some credit the next two or three years: I have made most of the inevitable mistakes and outlived them, and I have made the acquaintance of the people.

We have gone on in this shabby fashion so long that perhaps no conceivable Congress can be made to understand what an Embassy is—or ought to be—we have gone on continually lowering our standing in English eyes at least; and this is one reason why our government is held in contempt here, cordially as they regard our people and our nation.

I fear I must take some blame on myself for getting into this box at all; for, if I had known what the real task is and that the obligatory cost is so great, of course I should not have dared to come. But nobody was frank with me about this aspect of the post. In fact, nobody (but you and me) seems ever to be quite frank about our relations to Great Britain. Consequently, the public here, both official and private, construes our lack of an embassy as proof of our fear of the Irish and of the yellow press. They assume that these determine our policy; and this assumption fits practically every fact and every occurrence for the last decade or two, except only your Message asking for the repeal of the discriminating tolls clause in the Panama act. And when an Ambassador talks about a really satisfactory mutual understanding and trust, the man who sits next him says when he sits down: "It's a real pity that your great government can't have an embassy in London." Merely as a diplomatic asset, a good house here would be worth to us a thousand times what it would cost. The lack of it plays so important a part in British public opinion that I have had moods when it seemed to me hardly worth any man's while to keep going night and day to try to counteract the effect of this omission.

I pray you pardon all this, my dear Mr. President. It is an unpardonably long explanation of an unfortunate situation. I imagine after all that the best way out of it is for you to relieve me of further duties that I cannot pay for, find a man of fortune for this post, too, and let my resignation help, if it can be made to help, toward an understanding of the whole diplomatic problem. Perhaps that's the best service I can render, after all. But I shouldn't be candid if I didn't express a profound regret, for I am eager now, since I have begun to learn how, to serve you and to do what I can to build up a right understanding of us and of our government abroad. The first step in building up such a right understanding here must be a house for our Ambassador. If I go away, however, because I can't afford it and my successor has to pay for his own house—that'll not be a flattering or helpful condition for him to begin his labour under. It's surely a bad predicament.

Yours most heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

As a result of this letter the President sent Page an allowance from a special fund for the years 1915 and 1916. The larger part of his expenses, however, were carried by his private purse for five years. The outbreak of war naturally made his retirement impossible. Since the above letter was written Congress has greatly improved the status of the diplomatic service; it has even started the purchase of embassies in large capitals; it has made more than the beginning of promotions on the basis of merit, so that Ministers and even occasionally Ambassadors are appointed from the regular service. However, this country is still far from having a regular diplomatic system in the European sense.

Page found much compensation in the ability and fidelity of his staff, especially of his First Secretary, Mr. Irwin Laughlin. Of Mr. Laughlin's personal devotion the preceding volumes give evidence in plenty. He was the first man to meet Page on his arrival in Liverpool in May, 1913; five years afterward, he supported the Ambassador's weak and wasted frame as he boarded the train at Waterloo Station on the first step of his journey home. In those five years Mr. Laughlin was constantly at Page's elbow; the Ambassador made hardly a move without consulting this accomplished diplomat. An experience of fifteen years, spent in the most important capitals, had given Mr. Laughlin a knowledge not only of foreign problems, and the relation of his country to them, but a deep insight into the routine and technique of diplomatic life. He was equally at home drafting a diplomatic dispatch, in deciding rules of precedence, and in determining precisely the right way to approach statesmen and court officials. Especially in the early days, when Page was new, and, as he himself has said, "green" in the ambassadorial life, was the tactful and skilful guidance of Mr. Laughlin indispensable. In Page's view his First Secretary represented precisely the kind of man that the Government should encourage by promotion.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
March 29, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Mr. Laughlin, the First Secretary of our Embassy here, is just gone home to spend his vacation. It is now an off season in this country with a calendar and weather all its own. In a few weeks, he will be in Washington where he will spend ten days or a fortnight. He will, of course, immediately report to the Secretary, and I have asked him to let Tumulty know as soon as he arrives; for I hope you will at some time while he is there find a chance to send for him and to talk with him at some length.

He has my complete confidence. He directs and, in the largest measure, does the routine work of the Embassy, and I depend on him more than on all the rest of the staff together. I can hardly imagine a more careful or conscientious man.

He is just past forty by a year or two; he has been in the diplomatic service most of his working life; he knows international law, and (which is much harder to learn) all the ins and outs of diplomatic usage; and because of his official residence in many capitals, he knows the larger part of the diplomatic corps of all countries. One of the first things that Sir Edward Grey said to me was: "I hope that Mr. Laughlin will remain with you." He speaks and writes French fluently and he has a working knowledge of German and Japanese and several other languages. He is a man of fortune and entertains, in most admirable good taste, the most interesting and helpful people—with the simplest elegance. Not by any means least in this game, Mrs. Laughlin is a young woman of charm and ability. In fact, she is, in her way, as useful a member of our diplomatic family as he is in his way. They showed Frank and Jessie some attention—gave them a dinner or two I think; and, if they happen to be in Washington while the Laughlins are there, I am sure they will wish to see something of them.

Now this is just the kind of man we ought to make a Minister of—when a good chance offers, later, and when I can afford to lose him, as I can't yet! Unless such a promotion come to him his career will end with his service here, for he now holds the highest sub-ministerial post we have. When he entered the service years ago, he called himself a Republican, but he soon ceased to have any more politics than a naval officer and for the same reason.

I have given him memoranda of certain subjects that he will be glad to talk over with you—in my confidence. I wish simply by this note to direct your attention to him. He will let you hear when he gets to Washington.

Yours very heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Page's difficulties with the anti-British elements in American life, and with their spokesmen in Congress and the press, are already sufficiently familiar. His first year in London was especially marked by episodes of this kind. His famous description of the United States as "English-led and English-ruled" particularly afforded material for his critics. It was used in a speech at a dedication of a monument to the Pilgrim Fathers at Southampton. Precisely what he meant is described in a letter to President Wilson.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
January 23, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Last August (observe the date—five and a half months ago) I made a speech at the unveiling of a monument to the Pilgrim Fathers at Southampton which, I really thought, was quite a good speech—for me. Surely it was well received. Almost every newspaper in England and Scotland published it and commended it; and I felt that it had something of an effect in commending me to the kindly consideration of men who heard it and read it.

In that speech I said that the United States is "English-led and English-ruled." This phrase came at the end of an elaboration of the fact that the English language, English law, English freedom, English literature, etc., are our heritage and the foundation of our civilization; and in saying "English" it was perfectly obvious that I meant Scotch, if you will, and as far as historic truth permits, Irish also. Perhaps I should have done better if I had said "British." But we don't naturally say the "British language, British literature," etc. In other words there was not in my mind nor in anybody's mind at the time the slightest suggestion of any discrimination against the Irish, or the Scotch, or the Germans, or the Jews, or the Syrians, or anybody under Heaven; and everybody knew it.

A long time afterward—several months—these four words only from the speech began to appear in the Irish papers in the United States—"English-led and English-ruled," taken from their context and used, without reference to the occasion, as an insult to Ireland. Mayor

Fitzgerald[1] found himself insulted and offended most grievously. Various Irish societies passed resolutions of censure. One day Senator Chamberlain[2] read a lot of 'em in the Senate, which recited how the Irish in Oregon were ashamed of an Ambassador in London who went out of his way to insult our patriotic German and Jewish fellow citizens. Now I hear that Senator Weeks[3] is going to introduce a resolution in the Senate demanding my recall.

All this, I have just learned, is the work of Miss Lillian Scott Troy, a California lady who has in times past appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and protested against arbitration treaties with Great Britain, against celebrating the one hundred years of peace, against everything that does not spell blue ruin for John Bull. She says that Senator Chamberlain, Senator Weeks, Senator O'Gorman,[4] and I don't know how many more, keenly feel the disgrace that I have brought on the Administration and on the nation.

Well, I don't know whether Senator Weeks is going to introduce such a resolution or not—probably he will—nor do I care a tinker's damn, except for two possible results which, I confess, would be annoying:

(1) If it should cause you annoyance, and

(2) Because there would be an item about it in every newspaper in Christendom, giving his accusations only.

For these reasons, if I knew how, I should stop it. But I don't know how at this distance.

All that I can do, at this distance, is to make sure that you understand the genesis and the stimulation of the whole matter; and, to that end, I present to your attention —reluctantly—Miss Lillian Scott Troy. ("Troy" is ominous!) To live up to her standard, I should have to abolish the word "English" from my vocabulary.

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[1] Of Boston.

[2] Of Oregon.

[3] Of Massachusetts.

[4] Of New York.

Very heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

These attacks produced no disastrous results though they were occasionally renewed in this and other forms. The Ambassador had the complete sympathy and confidence of President Wilson, and other matters of more far-reaching consequence presently absorbed the interest of the London Embassy.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESIDENT AND THE AMBASSADOR

I

A PARTICULARLY charming aspect of this early correspondence is the glimpse it gives of the warm personal relations existing between the President and his Ambassador. The extent to which the Administration was justifying Page's expectations and the pride that he felt in Mr. Wilson's growing reputation in England and Europe, added immeasurably to his daily satisfaction with life. On certain developments of the Mexican situation, indeed, the Ambassador could not agree, but in the President's great purpose—his ambition to create a constitutional system in Mexico and reorganize Mexican conditions on modern lines—Page once more saw the fulfilment of his own ideals. But the thing that delighted him most was the exhibition in Washington of a fine intellect, trained in literature and the science of government, successfully applying itself to great practical tasks. The fact that Page afterward radically differed with his chief on matters of historic consequence necessarily tempts one to linger over this period of their association when the two minds and wills were working in the utmost harmony.

In view of the events of the next four years, one letter written by Page, two months after his arrival in England, has a fairly momentous interest. At this time Mr. Wilson's Presidency was only four months old, yet his new conception of his office, the high principles that he had already introduced into Federal policy, the vigour with which he was attacking great and pressing domestic problems, and the firm hold which he had obtained on American respect, had powerfully impressed the Ambassador. That this new leadership promised much for democratic progress in the United States was clear, but Page believed that it could be profitably exercised in a much wider field. Again and again the wish to "do something constructive" rose uppermost in Page's mind. The European scene, it is apparent, shocked and saddened him. The spectre of militarism and irresponsible autocracy, hideous enough when viewed across three thousand miles of ocean, assumed an unimagined horror when contemplated at first hand. The time had come, Page believed, for some new kind of international leadership. "Was there ever greater need than there is now," he wrote in a famous memorandum already quoted,[1] which he sent to many close friends in the United States, "of a first-class mind unselfishly working on world problems?" Only disinterested leadership of this kind could possibly dissipate the danger then overhanging civilization. There was only one force, Page believed, that was powerful and conscientious enough to protect mankind from the menace preparing against it in Central Europe. This was the mighty power embodied in the Anglo-American peoples: the wealth, the intelligence, the ideals, the genuine and unselfish enthusiasm for democratic progress embodied in the United States and Great Britain and the great British Dominions. But the energy and purpose represented in this combination could be exercised for useful ends only under leadership of the ablest kind. Where was the leader? The answer seemed obvious; in his consideration of the problem, indeed, Page saw in Woodrow Wilson the one indispensable man for the great task.

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[1] Volume I, page 272.

Mr. Wilson was more closely related in blood to the British Isles than any of his predecessors. His grandfather, James Wilson, had come to the United States from the north of Ireland in 1804; his mother, Janet Woodrow, was born in Carlisle, England,and spent her earliest years there. The President regarded the British Constitution as the final achievement of man in the great act of self-government —in certain respects placing it even above the American Constitution—and English literature he had always studied as the most eloquent expression of the human spirit. For militarism and force Mr. Wilson had an innate aversion that had its roots not only in emotion but in a carefully reasoned philosophy of government and society. In addition to the necessary moral and intellectual equipment, Mr. Wilson had that vibrant tongue and pen, that impressive personal appearance, and that compelling authority which, in Page's eyes, had set him aside for leadership in this new work. No American statesman—at least in modern times—had ever filled the White House who could so sympathetically recall to Englishmen their own finest type of public man.

Probably Page's imagination shot ahead of the international sentiment of his own time, yet the fact must be recorded that it was his plan, as early as 1913, a year before the war, to use President Wilson for the purpose of preventing the calamity that after four years of ruin he was afterward called upon to compose. Only the association of the English-speaking peoples, under the leadership of President Wilson, could save the world from the gathering storm. A visible demonstration that the United States and Great Britain were working, not in any definite alliance, but with common aims, was the one thing that would make Europe pause. A visit of the President and his wife to England would, in itself, Page believed, have prevented a European war. He well knew that Europeans attach an importance to friendly interchanges of this kind which Americans scarcely understand, and an official visit, set off with all the grace of Mr. Wilson's oratory, would in itself produce an impression on Europe that might have the most far-reaching consequences.

To the President

The Coburg Hotel,
Grosvenor Square, London, W.
July 9, 1913.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I am writing you this little note about a subject that is none of your business nor mine and is, therefore, the more fascinating as well as the more important: I pray you if you have any influence in that quarter, you will persuade your daughter and her fiancé, when they are married, to accept the invitation that Mrs. Page took great pleasure in sending a little while ago to make us a visit. We can, I hope, really contribute to their pleasure and give them an interesting experience. It will be out of the London "season"; there will be no court functions, but there'll be plenty of other things; and we can make as much or as little fuss about them as they wish. You and I may not confess it, but just a little well-regulated fuss gives lots of fun—to the young. We all come here and see the outside of London. The inside few of us see; and, I assure you, the inside is well worth getting some glimpses of. They are a noble race yet, these dukes and earls and knights, and you forget their gauds on close view. There is now a Lady X. and a Lady Y. who are sprung in direct line from John Hampden. I know them both and the sons of both are as fine young fellows as this adventurous planet holds. These folk and their like, few of whom ever visit our shores, are very simple and genuine and hospitable; and it is a most interesting experience to know them. This experience and such like I should like to give to your fine, genuine young couple as they start forth. And we'd at the same time give these good folk here a most pleasant experience. I bespeak your good offices then toward this international opportunity.

And this, quite sufficient for its own sake, is also a prelude to a more swelling song. Later, when the first big tasks are done, you and Mrs. Wilson must come here—I mean during your Presidency. Then you'll smash a precedent to some purpose. I've thought very much about American-English relations. We don't want any alliances: that would bind *us* to them in their troubles; and under our system we can't even make a treaty: no great matter. But we do wish to keep very close—as close as can be without any artificial force at work and without entangling alliances. The one tie will be made—the one possible and effective bond—by a friendly visit of the President and his wife.[1] Ask House. I mentioned it to him one day and his imagination turned red.

For the present, however, the young couple. Further our plan in their favour.

With all good wishes for your health and continued mastery,

Yours affectionately,
WALTER H. PAGE.[2]

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[1] It might prevent an Anglo-German war and possibly an American-Japanese war also. The world would take notice to whom it belongs. (W. H. P.'s note.)

[2] This letter is printed from a copy found in Page's papers. The original does not appear in the President's file. Since Page, in a letter to Colonel House dated August 25, 1913, tells of having written to the President on this subject and since Page's papers contain President Wilson's reply, there seems no doubt that it was sent. See Volume I, pages 275 and 276.

President Wilson's reply to this letter, printed in an earlier volume,[1] expressed a desire to fall in with the suggestion and an agreement with Page's point of view, but a belief that the plan was impracticable. There was too much work to be done at home, and the "case" against the President's leaving the country was "overwhelming." Page never missed an opportunity, however, of making President Wilson a familiar figure in England. The President's character and purposes were his favourite topics of conversation. He devoted many speeches to setting forth the new presidential aims; and so, when the Authors' Club invited him to be its guest on December 3, 1913, it was natural that he should take as his subject, "President Wilson as a Man of Letters." The address and the Christmas letter sent to the President two weeks afterward again portray the fine spirit of friendship and understanding prevailing between the two men.

"I am most thankful to say that Mr. Wilson happens to be one of my oldest and best friends, and I cannot divest myself of his friendship," said Page on this occasion. "Of all the forces which bind together your country and mine there is no other one comparable to literature. The friendship of governments is well, very well, but it is little; the friendship of peoples is very much more important and stable, and the friendship of peoples could have no firmer foundation than in a common literature.

"With the hope of interesting you for a few moments I may tell you something of the intellectual qualities of the man, and how they have found expression in his literary activities. I first had the pleasure of making Mr. Wilson's acquaintance just thirty-two years ago this week. We were both somewhat younger than we are now, and he had finished his college career and had gone to Atlanta to practise law. He was a well-trained lawyer. I met him there and he seemed to have quite an abundance of time to read. At that time a series of books was coming out on various aspects of the English Government—if I am not mistaken by a gentleman who in those days was called Mr. John Morley. Mr. Wilson was profoundly interested in them, so much so that I saw at once, on very early acquaintance, that the very first love of his mind was the love of the study of government. There he was, a young man of twenty-seven or twenty-eight, with his living to earn, caring very much more about whether he thoroughly understood the theory of the British Constitution than he did about any client whatsoever. He soon discovered—admirable as his legal training had been, and he had what I regard as a great legal mind—that his passion for the study of government was stronger than his passion for the service of clients.

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[1] Volume I, page 276.

"He went to the Johns Hopkins University, and set himself to the study of history and government. After two years there he presented his thesis for his doctor's degree, a book which he called 'Congressional Government,' in which he showed that the real rulers of the United States were not Congress, but that it was the Committees of the two Houses which really ruled the American people. Everybody knew it as soon as it was said, but nobody had said it for many years before. He elucidated that in a little book which has become one of the classics of our government, and that was his thesis for his doctor's degree.

"Having received that, he wished still further to pursue his studies of government, and became a teacher. After two or three years at smaller colleges he was called to the professorship of Jurisprudence at his own University of Princeton. There he became a great teacher of government as well. Up to this time I dare say few of his friends had ever thought of his being a man of action, except his most intimate friends, because he always showed them that quality of his mind which meant leadership. As a teacher he was a notable leader and an admirable lecturer.

"Here was a man, therefore, who up to this period of his life might be said to have three careers from which he might choose. He might be a lawyer, he might be a great expounder, he might be a man of action. Having those three careers to choose from he chose all three.

"One member of his Cabinet said to me after he had sat at the Cabinet table for three months, 'There has never come a question before the Cabinet but what the President instantly had an opinion about it, and he expressed it as a man would express an opinion he had thought out several years before.' That is just what he has done.

"Here is a man who pleases his mind and cultivates it by reading Wordsworth and by an equally intelligent study of Burke. In one of his essays he laid down that a man of literature must first of all have something to say, and then, that he cannot hope to say it in a way that will attract and convince men unless he become a great artist in the use of speech. And he has put himself through terrible trials for thirty years to master the great art of expository speech.

"He never lost sight of the fact that a man who uses our language, and has ideas that he wishes to impress upon people, must express them with the deftest artistry if he can, and he has been a hard student of the art of expression. He has a thoroughly trained legal mind which now stands him in good stead. He has a well-furnished mind in economics and in the history of government, and his state papers are written with the same literary care that the best of you ever give to the best of your sonnets.

"I know of no other ruler in the world who is his superior in respect of the literary style of his state papers.

That is the literature he is now making. Not since Lincoln has there appeared a man in American life whose 'stump' speeches, put in book form, have had the wide reading that Mr. Wilson's have had. Here is a man who believes with all the earnestness and inevitableness that a man ever believed anything, the simple creed of a democracy, and he does not flinch from carrying it out to its farthest consequences. He is convinced that a man can believe only one thing in his life, and the literature that he has produced and is producing, is the exposition of that profound belief. He has an essentially moral belief also, and his mind is essentially a moral mind, as recent events have given the best possible evidence.

"With all this he has what I call the true humility of a great mind. If I do not speak in praise of Mr. Wilson I fear I shall have to cease to speak, for it is by reason of his command that I owe the honour of dwelling among you. I owe him, also, the intellectual stimulus and companionship of more than thirty years, and there are many men in the United States who feel proud to pay him that tribute. If you will kindly remember that I have not spoken anything about the President of the United States, that I have spoken only of Woodrow Wilson, and that I have no official relation to the United States or anything except to the Authors' Club, I will thank you."

To the President

American Embassy, London,
21 December, 1913.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

First and foremost your young folk[1] who have gone off with Doctor Grenfell for a week—they have given us and many others here great joy. I dare say they have written you about some of their experiences; but they couldn't write, for they don't know, how much pleasure they have given us. In one sense they have come in a dull time, but for that reason we have ourselves seen more of them; and even when most of the great people are gone, there's a good deal of London left. All our friends have been greatly charmed by them. When they first came I congratulated Frank; when they had been here a week, I congratulated Jessie; when they went away the other day I congratulated them both.

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[1] Mr. and Mrs. Francis Bowe Sayre, son-in-law and daughter of the President, then on their honeymoon to England.

And now comes the news of the Senate's passing the currency bill[1]—an unmatched record in one year's legislation and leadership. You've now got to high tableland—these two peaks[2] surmounted; and I hope all the governmental and party prospect is pleasing. You may be sure of this—here your hand is felt. When I first came here I encountered a good deal of curiosity about the personality and the qualities of the new President. Now I encounter the profoundest respect and constant congratulations. It's fairly amazing how quickly and accurately in this insular world of great ignorance about the United States they "measure up" our real men. Sir Edward Grey and the Prime Minister have both this week said things to me about you that sound almost as if they knew something about our government and the spirit of our institutions and people. They are in a good temper and in a good mood, and Tyrrell[3] has come back in good time to help that. He tells me much about you and House and Houston.[4] "I'll tell you what I like about them," said he: "they don't gush." Then he went on to say how you talked in the same phrases as their Liberal leaders here. "They talked before me just as they talk to one another." It was a good stroke—his going. When House comes over again, that, too, will be a good stroke. If only you should see your way to come, as perhaps you may yet.

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[1] This is the Federal Reserve Act, passed December 23, 1913.

[2] The other "peak," of course, was the Underwood Tariff Act.

[3] Private Secretary to Sir Edward Grey, now permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. His trip to the United States is described in Volume I, Chapter VI.

[4] Secretary of Agriculture in the Wilson Cabinet.

The peace plan which has been carried out in treaties with several small Central American states will, I fear, if presented here, provoke the answer that a renewal of the Arbitration Treaty should come first. That is more definite, concrete, helpful. But, as I say, they are in a mood here to be quite patient. I am surprised, as I think it all over, at the number of reversals of positions they have made—in the Mexican business, in the concessions business—in everything we have asked.

That San Francisco Fair decision is the only exception. That stands. The Government's declination to reopen the subject is, I am informed, due to local politics. The very vigorous British agitation in behalf of the San Francisco Fair has its motive in a wish to please us. "The United States," they say, "wishes us to go and that is a sufficient reason why we should go." As nearly as I can guess, the chance that the Government will be forced by Parliament to participate is small.

As Christmas comes, I am glad to say that my diplomatic docket is entirely cleared up—the slate's clean.

The one thing that my mind works toward all the time is the hope of finding a chance to do something constructive, something that will stand out and last and be important in the relations of the two peoples. These relations are surely most satisfactory; but there is an immense amount of ignorance of the other on each side.

My life continues to be interesting and very busy and in every way pleasant. Its usefulness I sometimes doubt, because of the lack of definite constructive work. (Bryce reassures me and says that I am mistaken.) Then the vast silence across the ocean and the rhetorical indefiniteness at the other end of the line give a feeling at times of a vast vagueness. Your letters, you may be sure, are always reassuring and most helpful. They are the only definite things I get. I am told, too, that this is always so—perhaps it must be so. But that will be remedied presently, I know. For how big in more essential things are the great tasks you have done since March—the Tariff Act, the Currency Act, the Principle of Saving Helpfulness touching Latin-America, the preservation of the integrity of the Consular Service and of the rank and file of the Diplomatic Service (this has had a great good effect in every European capital), and the welding of the old hungry and growling party into an intelligent and loyal instrument of government. These achievements are so great and so fundamental that, in comparison, it would matter little if we had no diplomatic service. You will, therefore, never catch me complaining of any little sorrows of my own: if I had them, they would not be worth airing; and I am most happy to serve.

During the last month I have made almost a speech a day—most of them after-dinner speeches before such bodies as the Royal Society, the Economic Section of the University of London, the Authors' Club, the Worshipful Company of Mercers, the Navy League, and the like; and I have tried to present one idea in each little speech that should give the company one clear-cut notion of some part of the work of our great Democracy. They receive my commonplaces most heartily. I had the satisfaction of receiving the appreciative thanks of a group of judges of the higher courts, including the Lord Chief Justice, on an explanation of our Mexican policy. They had not before understood it at all. It requires a surgical operation to get so simple a principle into the British head. All this activity, I dare hope, helps—a little. But it's very slow and—it's work as hard as it is pleasant. But all real life is an adventure and this is adventurous enough, you may be sure. I've worn two dress coats to a frazzle, the Lord knows how many pairs of motor tires, and I've been stopped for speeding. But I'm too old a fox to eat their dinners or to drink their wines. Still, if the King lives as long as I've toasted and sung him in my hopes of long life to him, he'll be immortal. He must have got some inkling of it, for he sent me two brace of pheasants the other day.

Now all this is a rambling and, I fear, a dull letter—meant only to do this: to convey my hearty congratulations and good wishes for some rest for yourself and for a Big New Year and many of them.

Always faithfully,
Walter H. Page.

December 21, 1913.

Here's a rather good piece of news—the English and the Germans, who own most of the ships, had been so running the Safety at Sea Conference that it became obvious that their report would be merely a clean bill of health for all ships afloat. Several days ago Mr. Alexander[1] ran across the Prime Minister—at a luncheon, I think. Mr. Asquith asked him how the Conference was going. Alexander told him that it seemed doubtful whether the report would be such that the American delegates would sign it. The Prime Minister evidently passed a word of caution and command along; for the very next day things began to go differently. I heard that the Prime Minister said that the report *must* be one that the Americans would sign. I ran across Lord Mersey at dinner about that time. He presides over the Conference, and he's a sleek, fine old Law Lord who says startling things as gently as a sucking dove. He said to me, slyly smiling: "Your Excellency, I have an observation to make to you about your countrymen: they fight well—your Honourable Mr. Alexander, for instance."

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[1] Joshua W. Alexander, Member of Congress, and Chairman of the American Commission to the Safety at Sea Conference.

"Thank you," said I.

You'll be pleased to hear, too, what the Lord Chancellor[1] said to me about your daughter. He asked that pair and my daughter to dinner and his only other guest was Lord Morley. Those old fellows had a gay time with the young folk. The Lord Chancellor (who looks like a bigger Hoke Smith and, I sometimes fear, *is* more or less like him) said to me afterwards: "A fine young lady: I like the breed."

W. H. P.

II

There was one episode of the Mexican disturbance of 1914 that caused considerably more excitement in England than in the United States. The American interest lay chiefly in the political phases of the Huerta revolution and in President Wilson's attempt to create something resembling a constitutional order in the great Indian Republic. The President's "idealism" made little impression on practical Englishmen, who, when they thought of Central America, thought almost exclusively of trade. In the latter part of February, 1914, however, Mexico wounded the pride of Great Britain in its most sensitive spot. The newspapers printed dispatches describing the murder of William S. Benton in the presence of Francisco Villa. Mr. Benton was an Englishman who, though he had lived in Mexico many years, had followed the usual British custom of retaining his British citizenship. Francisco Villa was the military leader of the Carranza revolutionists—the faction which the American Government was almost openly supporting against the Huerta régime. Villa and his associates first denied the crime, then misrepresented the circumstances and persistently evaded all attempts at investigation. That Benton had been murdered, that his murderers were Villa and his party, that he was a British subject entitled to the protection of the British Government, and that the United States was responsible for the Villa régime to the extent that it had encouraged the constitutionalists and made possible the munitioning of their army—amid a mass of contradictions and misstatements these facts were true and in themselves presented a grave situation.

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[1] Viscount Haldane.

Ever since the days of Lord Palmerston, one of the cardinal principles of British policy had been that the protection of the British Government followed a British subject to the four quarters of the earth. For the first time the British Government now felt itself helpless in face of a situation of this kind. The fact that the murder had been committed by the faction that was more or less under the protection of the American Government was especially embarrassing. Ordinarily the British Navy moves quickly to avenge insults of this kind, but the United States, under its interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, does not tolerate punitive expeditions by European governments on American soil. Moreover, a blockade of Mexican ports would merely have injured the Huerta government which Great Britain had recognized and to that extent have benefited the Villa and Carranza revolutionists, whose authority extended only over part of the northern section of Mexico. The only power that could act decisively was the United States. But the State Department, under Mr. Bryan, was moving in the most deliberate fashion. Meanwhile, the British press was demanding punishment, and the Opposition was prodding the Government in the House of Commons. Sir Edward Grey, in response to these questions, showed his usual self-restraint, but it was a restraint that revealed, rather than concealed, the seriousness of the situation. The old Palmerstonian cry of "*Civis Romanus sum*" was once more heard throughout the land, but now, in view of the exceeding complexity of Mexican affairs, not to much purpose.

To the President

London
Embassy of the United States of America,
Tuesday, February 24, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have to-day telegraphed the State Department how strong and widely spread the feeling is here that the policy of "watching and waiting" in Mexico has gone on long enough. The excitement about Benton is general and intense. I hear it and read it on every side. What I telegraphed about the German Ambassador's remarks—well, I take his attitude only as symptomatic of the German spirit of militarism. He's screwed up courage enough to express himself to me, encouraged by the criticism he now hears here of our course towards Mexico. This German prince Artemus Ward would have called an "amoosin' cus," a pretty fair specimen of the German courtier. Of course his remedy for everything is the sword, and I'm sure he'd like to see England and the United States have a row.[1]

Not so Sir Edward Grey. In my long talk with him yesterday he showed appreciation of our difficulties, and sympathy. You will notice his clearness and restraint in his answer in the House of Commons, which I enclose. But he is much worried. He told me that the British public never became so much excited as when a subject had been killed in a foreign land. He confessed to some fear of harsh criticism of the United States in the House of Commons. But he is our mainstay—a moderate, patient, wise man, the biggest Englishman I have met. I am to dine with him to-morrow night, and, if I hear anything worth writing, you shall hear it. These friendly intimate meetings sometimes yield more than even the best official interviews.

I don't foresee just what we may be able with dignity to do in this case of Benton. But the more we can do the more patient English opinion will be. It is just the kind of an incident that excites the Briton most.

Sir Edward's pleasure at the renewal of the Arbitration treaty was very great. "Things are clearing up," he said. On that, my own hearty congratulations.

The public comment on it here has been far less than it would have been if the Benton incident had not come at the same time. That has for the moment taken attention from every other foreign event.

Very heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

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[1] This is an early judgment of Prince Lichnowsky; afterward Page had reason to think much more admiringly of him.

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
London, February 28, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have during the week telegraphed reports of the prodigious excitement here about Benton's death and of the calmness under severe criticism of Sir Edward Grey and the Government. Kill an Englishman at home and there is no undue excitement. But kill one abroad, and gunboats and armies and reparation are at once thought about—a state of mind that English rule in India and in other far-off foreign lands has made necessary till it has become instinctive. Of course, too, the financial impatience about Mexican investments has taken advantage of the incident. It need not disturb us, I think, although it will cause quite a strong critical feeling against us for some time to come. There is no doubt about that.

I took occasion in my talk with Sir Edward Grey to-day to say very frankly that, while the event was in every way regrettable, the death of a man who, having long lived in a country and married there and amassed property and apparently taken sides in politics, and who yet had not become a citizen of that country, and who had so little judgment as deliberately to go and quarrel with a man who had military power—I told him that such a man's death was not an event that should in any way be thought of sufficient importance to cause a change in a well-thought-out righteous principle upon which a great government was directing its actions towards Mexico and towards all Central America. I thought it opportune, while I could thank him for his own considerate attitude, to tell him plainly that the incident is exaggerated in the British mind. He showed (rather than said) that he agreed with me, as I am sure he does. But he must answer to an excited House of Commons. He'll stand square and firm, however, in his relation to us. I feel sure of that.

I had to reason all this out myself and reach the conclusion that *we* ought not to become excited and therefore that we would not become excited; for I have had no word from our government about the Benton incident. Two hours after my talk with Sir Edward Grey, the afternoon papers brought me news of the (your) Cabinet decision yesterday. If I had known *that* while I was with him I dare say I could have spoken with more vim. This is a fair instance of the way in which I sometimes have to think out what our government ought to do and to proceed upon *that*, as if I knew. This method has worked all right so far, but there are obvious dangers in it. If there were some man whose especial business it was to telegraph me about that Cabinet meeting, it would have been a great help.

When the *Times* published its ferocious leader the other morning (such things have a real influence here as nothing similar has with us) I immediately invited the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*,[1] which is the government organ, to dinner. During dinner his wife told me they were all much distressed about the *Times*, and, after dinner, Spender himself said the same thing. He is to spend the afternoon with me to-morrow—of his own seeking—after my giving him this friendly chance. He is in the Government's confidence to an unusual degree. I sought to give the Prime Minister the same chance to talk. But, after he had accepted my invitation, the King commanded him to dine with him on the same evening. Bryce was here and said not a word! Neither did the King during the two hours that I explained baseball to him at the game between the "White Sox" and the "Giants." Most of the men who lately talked freely about Mexico are become silent. The *Spectator* to-day declares that our policy has lamentably and pitifully failed.

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[1] J. A. Spender.

All which, to my mind, shows how lucky it is for us and for the world that it is *our* job and not theirs. They would India-ize and Egypt-ize Mexico forever.

I have confidence in Sir Edward Grey and the Government; but I can talk to them better if I am kept informed.

Yours very heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
March 6, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The enclosed editorial from the *Pall Mall Gazette* is the best statement that I have seen of the way men who count for something here feel about the Benton case.

The exact influence and importance of the King in this government I could not explain in less than three hours—if I could at all. But it is very much more important than most men think—certainly than I thought a year ago. His real power grows out of his personality. Well, the King sent me word a few days ago that he now understands "your President" and sees what a high-minded and sagacious ruler he is. (Better not tell this to the Irish!)

Yours most heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

The Benton episode, like most other matters outside the European scene, was obliterated in the monstrous confusion precipitated by the German invasion of Belgium.

After August 4, 1914, it became, in fact, an exclusively American problem. In an earlier part of this work, the story, so far as Page was concerned with it, has been told with sufficient detail. His letters to President Wilson, however, bring out new points. The critics of President Wilson's Mexican policy overlook one argument in its favour. Page believed that Mr. Wilson's opposition to the Huerta régime in Mexico, though it had not destroyed the revolutionary spirit in that country and ushered in a constitutional democratic order, had saved not only Mexico, but a considerable part of Central and South America, from the exploitation of commercialists whose chief interest was oil. It came out in the progress of events that Lord Cowdray's company had acquired important concessions, not only in Mexico, but in Colombia and Ecuador. One result of American dissatisfaction at this kind of penetration was that Lord Cowdray relinquished these concessions at the demand of the British Government. In a letter dated March 19, 1914, Page discussed this incident. "I believe," he wrote, "that if Taft (let us say) had had another four years, Cowdray would have owned Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia, or so much of them as he cared for, with such a grip on their governments as would have amounted to a mortgage. He could have controlled them at any time and in any essential way he chose. The more I hear and see and learn, the surer I become that these countries owe their freedom from this dictatorship to you—for which release you will never get the credit or the thanks you deserve. Yet, I believe, too, that they are not going to give us any more trouble, certainly not so long as you are in power or any other man who may take your policy. They are doubly afraid—first of the United States, then of their own government in its relations to the United States. No

British Government is going to risk our friendship for commercial adventurers. I even believe that Cowdray is thoroughly convinced of the righteousness as well as of the power of the United States and of its earnestness. . . . An excellent lady of title and character asked me to luncheon at her home—far out in Chelsea. I went. Cowdray and Tyrrell were present. We talked freely. I think I saw their minds—Cowdray with subdued financial ambitions, reconciled with his situation. He isn't vindictive. He will not fight for revenge. I think, in fact, he forgives his enemies. He is essentially good-natured, even amiable.

"Of course, you had a hand in their halting, for which you need not lose sleep o' nights. And the main fact is, I think they will give us little or no trouble. And the British Government will not risk displeasing us for them."

To the President

8 May, 1914, London.

Dear Mr. President:

The news that reaches London through every channel that I hear of—governmental, financial, and newspaper—indicates not only the early downfall of Huerta, but the gravest fears for the lives and property of foreigners in Mexico City especially, but throughout the whole country as well. I cannot guess to what extent these fears may be the result of the opinion that has prevailed here till now—that Huerta could never be dislodged by the "rebels"; and of course I have no data to form any opinion of my own.

But I report this universal fear of anarchy and murder and plunder because of its bearings on governmental relations. Sir Edward Grey is thoroughly alarmed. His advices are that such a state of things may follow as will endanger foreign lives and property everywhere in Mexico; and they (members of Parliament and others) are already asking this Government what assurances it has from us, or what preparations it is making, in common prudence, on the eve of the approaching catastrophe? And nobody here—from Sir Edward down—looks on Villa and Zapata except as scourges—thoroughly unprincipled—brigands and murderers. Carranza they know next to nothing about. But with Villa or Zapata as a conqueror, they will consider rank anarchy come. Are we in a position then to protect foreign lives and property? Will we take this active task in hand? I am asked this on all sides.

This I send for whatever it may be worth—nothing, or little, or much.

Yours sincerely,
WALTER H. PAGE.

P. S. The newspapers and certain question-asking members of Parliament keep saying that we have laid so much emphasis on the elimination of Huerta that we seem to have forgotten the larger problem of order and security in Mexico. This is as persistent as it is irritating.

P.

To the President

American Embassy London,
May 19, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The impending catastrophe in the City of Mexico casts its shadow here. Hardly a day passes but I am questioned and argued with and waited on, as, for instance, two days ago by a big banker and director in the Tehuantepec Railway. "I cannot meet the interest on my debentures," said he, "because your government has stopped traffic at one end. My shareholders are more or less dependent on their incomes from this source. What redress can I have? What can I tell them?" &c., &c., &c. Then, after a pause, "If your Government had recognized Huerta—as every other government did," &c.

Then I got my inning, after he had done—a courteous but much wrought-up old gentleman.

"Every other government?" I asked. "You mean, of course, European governments who have no responsibilities there. Argentina, Brazil, Chile have not recognized him; and recognizing a military dictator merely puts a premium on revolution."

He had not thought of that. "What can I tell my shareholders and clients?"

"Tell them, if I may make a suggestion, that Mexico is a country where disorder has reigned for about one hundred and seventy-five years out of two hundred, and that you failed to acquaint yourself with the history of the country in which you asked them to invest, and that, thanks to the United States, there is a chance that orderly government of a permanent sort may be set up as soon as possible and revolutions will be discouraged."

So it goes almost daily.

My hearty sympathy, my dear Mr. President, in this horrible state of things, with the noise of Jingoes and men who are honestly afraid, with the element of uncertainty in the Mexican character, with the possibility of some awful havoc of error that may precipitate war—how admirably your patience shines as a clear light in a dark world. I am afraid to pick up a paper or to hear the telephone ring. But I am of the opinion that your friend Tedcastle expressed to me the other day: "I don't know just how it will turn out, but I have more confidence in the President than in all the rest combined." One of the

English generals said to me yesterday: "Let me give you a good piece of military advice. Don't go to Mexico. Let 'em howl. Be patient. It will cost a lot of money and many lives, and you'll get no glory—you'll get nothing for this loss. I hope your President will not listen to warlike politicians. They cause us to shed *our* blood, not theirs."

I have felt a sort of guilt in finding that I must send my recent reports of general criticism here—that we are blameworthy first for not recognizing Huerta and secondly for hesitating so long about invasion. But, of course, it is my duty to report that feeling, and you must know the danger that this general feeling may *possibly* prevail in this Cabinet, if some disaster happen, in spite of Sir Edward Grey's admirable attitude. The British War Office lately sent for Colonel Squier, our Military Attaché, and asked him what he regarded as the smallest force that might make a march (if the railway were blown up) from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico—just why, neither Squier nor I know.

The Anglo-American exposition was opened the other day and among the speeches at the big luncheon was one by Lord Weardale who spoke of "The Wise Patience of the President of the United States." The Duke of Teck[1] turned to me and said, "He *is* a most patient ruler, and I sometimes hear his patience criticized. I am glad Weardale said that." All the newspapers here lack confidence in the Board of Mediation, and many of them laugh at it. They lack any sort of confidence in any Mexican promise or agreement. Yet the criticism is not very active. We shall overcome it if only some dramatic disaster do not disturb the orderly process of events.

Yours very heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

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[1] The Duke of Teck—a title exchanged in wartime for that of the Marquess of Cambridge—is the brother of Queen Mary.

The new cloud rising in Europe is evident from the variety of topics covered in the next letter. Colonel House is now in Europe on his famous expedition to establish some kind of working agreement with Germany, Great Britain, and the United States that would make impossible the European war.[1] He has had his rather discouraging interview at Potsdam with the Kaiser and is now in London discussing the same subject with Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, and the government leaders. The United States has recently sold the obsolete battleships *Mississippi* and *Idaho* to Greece, and thus fortified that power against a threatened naval attack by Turkey. The Mexican situation has been surrendered to the Ambassadors from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, who, in their meetings at Niagara Falls, have had little more success than American and British diplomats in finding a way out of the wilderness. Meanwhile the class struggle in Great Britain is raging in all unconsciousness of the vastly greater struggle hanging over Europe.

To the President

American Embassy,
London, July 5, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

There is nothing on the docket here but Mexico—and only the general question and no specific phase of that—and—House. He's as great a joy as Mexico is a sorrow. About Mexico I am talking with the government folk and with the newspapers. The poor government folk are driven and worried to death with two armies in Ireland, besides the King's army, and with budget troubles without end, and they are glad to be relieved of any immediate crisis in Mexico. I saw Sir Edward Grey at dinner two nights ago, looking much worried. I am told that he has lately threatened to resign from the Cabinet because something displeased him. A threat of resignation from him is a compelling argument; they couldn't afford to lose *him*. Our talk was all about—poetry; and he hurried away to the House of Commons as soon as coffee and cigars had been served. The Prime Minister I saw last night at the French Embassy. He's yet somewhat of a riddle to me. But there's no doubt that *he's* worried.

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[1] See Volume I, Chapter IX.

The bitter feeling becomes more bitter all the time. Since I've become an Oxford man,[1] I've seen it even in college life. A Tory M.P. the other day met the best friend of his college years, who is a Liberal. The Liberal walked up to his old friend with an eager greeting—"How are you, Jack?" and the Tory M.P. put his hands behind him and said: "I'm sorry, but I am not now keeping company with Radicals." Two nights ago the gibes of the two parties came near to a fist fight as the members were going out of the House—all which means that the revolution is making progress but that it is meeting desperate tactics by the opposition and the tension is indescribable and—painful. It wears even a spectator to weariness. But I am keeping House's ball rolling (slowly) with Sir Edward Grey, and House and Spring Rice and Tyrrell and Haldane and I are to lunch together in a few days. Then, a few days later, the Prime Minister is to dine with me—all designed for talk about House's big plan. You can't talk with them except at luncheon or dinner—food with talk every time. They're trying to find something to say to Germany, which is hard because they don't fundamentally trust the Germans. Grey is deeply in earnest, but he can't get rid of the fear that the Germans may misuse his approaches and turn them against him. But the German Emperor has sent for his Ambassador here, who is now with him at Kiel for ten days. That *may* mean something. I'll give the Ambassador a chance to tell me as soon as he comes back.

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[1] The Ambassador had recently received the degree of D. C. L. from Oxford.

The Greek Minister came to see me yesterday, excited with joy. He's one of the ablest and most agreeable of the whole diplomatic corps. He wished to express his unbounded thanks "to your far-seeing wise President who has enabled us to prevent war." I confess he made a quite convincing statement of his case, as he had done to me once before. Since I telegraphed the Department about criticisms that had reached me, I have heard nothing more of them. Symington (our Naval Attaché) is keeping in close touch with all the naval people and he will tell me if they continue to talk. But Gennadius, the Greek Minister, while he is, of course, making out his own special case, is a broader and wiser man, by far, than the mere naval man of any country. When I told him I would write to you what he had said he was greatly pleased.

The Argentine and Chilean Ministers, both quite capable men, are greatly pleased, too, that their governments are taking a hand in the Mexican muddle. They have told me over and over again that this mere fact (whatever come of the Niagara Conference) will make an immensely better feeling in their countries toward the United States. I meet one or both of them every two or three days, and we always hold a mediation conference ourselves. They are proud that they (i. e., their governments) are admitted to the game. The Brazilian Minister to this government was recalled about the time that mediation began, and his successor is not yet come. I have it in mind to talk with the Brazilian Chargé, when I can do it without seeming to go out of my way. If I sent for him to come and see me, he'd exaggerate the importance of the whole incident. (You'd laugh a pound of flesh off if I could tell you the intricacies of diplomatic etiquette at a court even no more formal than this.) I meet the Argentine and Chilean Ministers anywhere, any day—the last time at a big dance, where we sat in a corner and settled all South and Central American troubles. This easy way of doing things comes of their having attractive wives who are sought at big social functions—one of them, by the way, a countrywoman of ours. This is a big thing—having these A B C. governments in this game. These men here very frankly express their pride and satisfaction, and their wives quite as freely.

It's rather exhilarating: at this moment the British Government (in House's big plan), the Greek Government, the Argentine Government, and the Chilean Government, all showing even here their great pride in having the friendship of the United States. Add to this list the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha of whom I saw much at Oxford—for Germany; and about half the Liberian Cabinet who are in London and have asked for an audience with me this week! Those poor darkies, I'm afraid, are not men born to govern. It's hard to get the truth out of their too-much talk. But of them, later.

This letter, too, has been delayed by the Fourth of July. Sports, the week end, etc., kept many away from my reception, which I held in my house. (Your kinsman and his wife were among the eighteen hundred to two thousand who came.) It's a funny thing that thousands of men, women, and children who at home never went to a reception and never observed the Fourth of July in any way will so arrange their journeying as to be in London to attend the Ambassador's reception! This seems to me as odd as that newspapers in the United States (so I am told) completely turn my poor speeches on "literary" occasions so as to make me say precisely the opposite of what I did say and then abuse me for it and report that the very people here resent what I say who take the trouble to write me too flattering complimentary letters! It does beat the Dutch—this business of being an Ambassador. I made a speech at the Royal Literary Fund Dinner which half the authors in England have praised in letters to me. I confess the audience and the British public and I thought it rather good. I hear that I'm scolded in the United States for offending all the writers in England! Of course it would be easy enough to be silent and—do only half my job. Well, for that matter, it's easy enough to go on and pay no attention to them. The English papers this morning do not report even you intelligently in your Fourth of July speech at Philadelphia. At a rather jolly and rollicking dinner of Americans last night at which Bryce and the Primate of Ireland and others told good stories, I told of the man who came to see me the other day and asked if I thought that he and his friends could buy the Panama Canal—I told it as an offset to the story of the American who is said to have tried to buy Westminster Abbey. The crowd of course laughed. My family are to-day making wagers that the American papers will report that I am trying to sell the Canal! Well, we'll see—perhaps.

Yours most heartily,
Walter H. Page.

In July, General Huerta, the Mexican chieftain whose revolution had nearly caused serious misunderstandings between the United States and Great Britain, fled before the Carranzista forces and began those travels that took him to the United States and Spain. His elimination from Mexican politics was a point upon which President Wilson had insisted from the first.

To the President

Sunday, July 19, 1914,
Hooke Court, Beaminster,
Dorset, England.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Just this line of jubilant congratulations on the course of events in Mexico. Of course the big constructive job is yet to be done, and of course there are grave difficulties. But this is an eight-league step forward—Huerta's quiet going. With the A B C governments sufficiently in the job to feel a certain responsibility and with the demonstration of the rightness of your vision and method, all the quiet great forces in the world must now come to your side.

I am everywhere talking a right explanation of it, in surroundings that are yet incredulous but that are now at least eager to listen. They see slowly, but they'll now begin to see. For the moment the English press is very dense on the subject; but events are very convincing things. I send you my heartiest congratulations.

Very faithfully yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

CHAPTER V

"THE CLASH OF SYSTEMS"

I

AS THE European war becomes a certainty, the figure of Sir Edward Grey takes on larger proportions than ever in Page's correspondence with the President. In that critical last week in July, a week that began with hope but which ended in the collapse of all efforts to forestall the conflagration, Page saw much of this contemplative statesman. For nearly ten years Grey had succeeded in postponing the war; his official career had represented crisis after crisis and conference after conference; time after time had he thwarted the European militarists; none realized so keenly as he, however, that now the inescapable hour, so long deferred, had arrived. Writing on Wednesday of this calamitous week, Page gives the President an indelible picture of Grey in face of the inevitable ruin. To appreciate its full meaning, the salient facts in the situation must be recalled. Once more we must transport ourselves to that period of despair and realize, as Sir Edward Grey almost alone of European statesmen realized, the complete hollowness of the diplomatic proceedings in which he had been recently engaged. These exchanges had been so much wasted paper. What made Grey's problem a hopeless one was that the gentlemen nominally representing the German Empire and the agencies with whom the Foreign Secretary was believed to deal, were mere dummies and phantoms—men without authority to commit their government or to settle anything. Not in their hands rested the issue of peace or war. Lichnowsky, Bethmann-Hollweg, and Von Jagow were not the spokesmen of Germany; the real centre of power was the militarist party, which did not engage in diplomatic correspondence but which had the deciding voice. That was the disheartening discovery which so preyed upon this statesman's mind. A few days previously he had proposed a European conference for the peaceful settlement of the Austro-Serbian quarrel. Germany had rejected the proposal, and this rejection, in Grey's opinion, could only mean that the militaristic autocracy, already cheated several times of its long-anticipated war, did not propose to be beguiled again into patching up a truce. Germany's "infamous proposal" that Great Britain should stand aside while France was destroyed, the British obtaining a "neutrality agreement" as compensation for the betrayal of a virtual ally, had removed the last hope of a peaceful issue. What stand was Britain to take in the face of this insult to her honour? The question which confronted Sir Edward at that moment was essentially the same as that which so depressed Page in the days of the submarine. The picture which the American draws of Grey on this occasion may be taken as a companion piece to that of Page, still vivid in the recollection of his intimates, drearily sitting all night long before his fire, pondering the possible outcome of the *Lusitania* crisis. The tremendous doubt clouding Grey's mind on this occasion was precisely the same as that which afflicted Page a year afterward. The problem essentially was one of national honour. Would Britain prove faithful to her duty and her interests, or would she stand aside while Germany and Austria wrought their destructive will in Europe?

At this time—four days before the Belgian question intervened to give the right impetus to British policy—Grey was the one great participant who clearly saw the merits of the situation. The future of Britain and Europe demanded British intervention, irrespective of the invasion of Belgium. Yet a majority of the Cabinet, a majority of the House of Commons, and probably a majority of the public, were strongly against war. At that very moment the anti-war group in the Cabinet were holding secret meetings to devise ways of blocking the Foreign Secretary's policy of succour to France. France was daily beseeching the Foreign Secretary for a pledge of assistance—a pledge which, Grey well knew, he could not obtain at that time from the Asquith Government. At the moment which Page's letter describes, therefore, not only a great national danger was overhanging Great Britain, but something which was far worse—national dishonour.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
July 29, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Yesterday before the news came that war had begun between Austria and Serbia, yielding to the impulse that every American feels, I went to see Sir Edward Grey and told him that I had come on my own initiative informally to ask him if he saw any way in which the good offices of our government could be used and that, if he did or should see any way, I prayed that he would inform me. He thanked me with feeling and said that he knew that the good influence of the United States could be counted on for peace, and he promised to inform me if he should see anything that we could do. I reminded him again that I had no instructions, but I reminded him also of your wish (of which I felt sure) and of the feeling of the whole

American people. Then this morning came Mr. Bryan's telegram of inquiry whether I saw a way for us to help. I immediately sent that to Sir Edward with a reminder of our conversation. There the matter for the moment rests. I do not yet see any way in which we could help, for England seems to me to be doing everything that can be done—England, with more direct influence on the Continental Powers than we could have. There has been running through my mind vaguely all day the query whether perhaps we might not in some way add our voice to England's—the wisdom or the uselessness of which you will have seen and decided before you receive this—in case the danger of a general war continue.

I think that every Ambassador here saw Sir Edward yesterday, and I purposely waited till late in the afternoon when they—all the rest—had gone. I think I shall never forget yesterday. There sat this always solitary man—he and I, of course, in the room alone, each, I am sure, giving the other his full confidence. He looked ten years older than he looked a month ago. He told me a day or two after the murder of the heir to the Austrian throne that he feared just what has happened and worse than has yet happened. He is, I imagine, the foremost Foreign Secretary in Europe. He has held this office eight years. He knows his European politics as perhaps no other man knows it. He is a forward-looking, liberal-minded man—a sort of sad and wise idealist, restrained and precise in speech and sparing in his use of words, a genuine clear-thinking man whose high hopes for mankind suffer sad rebuffs but are never quenched—a grave philosopher who feels the prodigious responsibility he carries. He had received Germany's refusal of his proposition of an ambassadorial conference. He was grieved, but I think not surprised. He still had hope that Russia and Austria would get together directly. "If Germany would give the word," said he, "war would be averted." Throughout his frank talk I felt the possibility of a sort of crack of doom for Continental Europe. This is the man who if the Liberals lose and win again in ten years, or if they hold on for a few years more, will be Prime Minister. Even the Conservative papers to-day, in spite of the intense party feeling, praise him and call on the whole nation to stand behind him.

A few hours later I went to dinner at Lord Glenconner's whose family are all especial friends of Sir Edward; and he was there. I do not often meet him dining out. He spends his evenings in the House and later at home with his dispatches and reports, and he frequently does several hours' work in bed in the morning. At dinner he was the same sad figure, saying little, absorbed, waking up once in a while with a smile and then slipping back into silence. After dinner there was music and he sat in a corner of the room—alone. He folded his arms and mechanically kept time with his foot, of course not hearing the music or anything else. The hostess sought him and marched him across the room, and he affected a certain gaiety which fooled nobody, not even himself. Lady Glenconner told me that he spent Sunday at her country house. In the afternoon he and she took a long walk and he told the whole European political story to her two or three times. After they came back to the house, he went off on a still longer walk alone.

All this is intensely interesting to me. Here is a great and sincere man working with a great government as his tool, working to save Europe from itself and (most likely) failing. Monarchy and privilege and pride will have it out before they die—at what cost! If they do have a general war they will so set back the march of progress in

Europe as to set the day forward for American leadership. Men here see that clearly. Even in this kingdom every ship is ready, every crew on duty, and every officer of the Admiralty office in London sleeps with a telephone by his bed which he expects to ring, and the telegraph men are at their instruments every minute. But of all men here the most impressive is the brooding, saddened, solitary Foreign Secretary, at whom men turn back and gaze as he drives along the street and for whose success every wise man in all Europe prays to-night. And he will tell me with a melancholy smile the next time I see him of his unfortunate fate that he cannot go fishing.

It's the Slav and the German. Each wants his day, and neither has got beyond the stage of tooth and claw. While I was talking to Sir Edward, Mrs. Page was talking to Prince X, who wishes to fight, who talks like a mediæval man, and so loves the blood of his enemies that, if he can first kill enough of them, he is willing to be whipped. He went home last night. Meantime, the price of bread has risen even in England.

Again and ever I thank Heaven for the Atlantic Ocean.

Very heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

London, Sunday night,
August 2, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

It seems useless and almost silly to write by mail about this quickly changing drama, for whatever one might write will become obsolete before you get it. Yet the impulse to put down what one hears and fears is irresistible. I detect even in English opinion an acquiescence, almost a satisfaction, that war between England and

Germany is certain. They feel that it must come some time—why not now and have it over? It is better to have it when Germany will have other enemies than England in the field than at some time when England might alone have to fight Germany—better, too, when the responsibility for starting it lies at Germany's door.

In one way at least race-hatred is at the bottom of it—the Slav against the Teuton. The time to have that fight out seems favourable to Russia; the old Austrian Emperor is in his last years, the Slav states of his empire are restive, not to say rebellious, England may be drawn in now to help weaken Germany, Russia feels the need of a patriotic race cry at this stage of her growth and the need of a war to cause forgetfulness of the Russian-Japanese disaster. I am told, too, that the Tsar—as, of course, most of his subjects—is really superstitious and that miracle-working priests—a sort of modern soothsayers—have a great influence over him; and of course the military party know how to use such machinery. We have to stop and think of such absurd things as this to realize the deplorable mediævalism of a large part of Europe and to understand why the criminal folly and the economic suicide of war do not have more effect on them. Russians, Germans, and even Frenchmen are, moreover, yet in that stage of evolution where the "glory" of war makes a strong appeal to them.

Already the foregoing is out of date. While I was writing, the news came of Germany's declaration of war against Russia and of her marching into Luxemburg, which of course means that France and England must become involved: I can see no escape from that. The general conflagration has begun.

My thoughts run quickly to what *we* may do. On my own initiative I asked Sir Edward Grey nearly a week ago if he could use the good offices of the United States for peace. Sir Edward is very appreciative of our mood and willingness. But they don't want peace on the Continent —the ruling military classes do not. But they will want it presently, and then our opportunity will come—*your* opportunity to play an important and historic part. Ours is the only great government in the world that is not in some way entangled. (How wise our no-alliance policy is!) Of course I'll keep in daily touch with Sir Edward and with everybody who can and will keep me informed.

The imagination simply balks at what may happen—at what *is* happening. The Embassy is already besieged by people who wish to go to the United States and can't, who have travellers' checks for which they cannot get money, and who have other unexpected troubles. I hear of even worse confusion in Paris.

This island is even now practically cut off from the Continent. Three days ago we talked with Paris by telephone. Now it is impossible to get a private telegram through with any certainty, and telephone communication is wholly cut off.

Our shipping and foreign commerce will gain immensely; our chance to help settle the quarrel will surely come—there was nothing that we could have done to prevent it; and our intimate and frank and confidential relations with this country are such that we will, I am sure, be called on as soon as they are willing to call on anybody to point the way back to reason.

Events here alone seem to me likely to make your Administration historic. Let's watch closely for chances to serve.

Yours—dazed——
WALTER H. PAGE.

In the midst of mobilizations and ultimatums and declarations of war, news of a different and more personal kind now reached the American Embassy. Mrs. Ellen Axson Wilson, the President's wife, died on August 7th. Abandoning the presidential style, Page now addressed his word of condolence to his friend.

To Woodrow Wilson

Bachelor's Farm,
Ockham, Surrey,
Sunday, August 9, 1914.

MY DEAR WILSON:

There is nothing that even your oldest and nearest friends can say—words fail in the face of a bereavement like this. But I can't resist the impulse to write how deeply I feel for you.

You would be touched if I could tell you the number of good men and women who every hour of the day and night have expressed to me the grief with which they heard the sad news—men and women who never saw you, from the King down to the English messenger in our embassy. Many of them have come in and left their cards. Sir Edward Grey especially charged me to convey to you his sincere sympathy. Before we plunged into the deepest depths of all this trouble, in the long conversation we had on Friday, he asked me many sympathetic questions about you and Mrs. Wilson. Lord Bryce, too, Jusserand, who is here trying to get back to Washington—everybody.

But, my dear friend, it hits us hardest who have known you longest and love you most and who wish for you now all possible strength, in this sad, sad hour of the world when, more than any other man in the world you are most needed—all possible strength to you. If the deep sympathy of all your friends, known and unknown to you, can help to support you and to keep your high spirit and courage up, you have it in most abundant measure.

Mrs. Page and I grieve with you and hope for you to the utmost.[1]

Yours with affectionate sympathy,
WALTER H. PAGE.

II

"No one can describe this vast wreck," Page wrote Wilson on August 25th, after three weeks of war. "It will be ours to preserve civilization. All Europe is shooting it to pieces." If by civilization we understand, as Page certainly did, democratic civilization, we have his whole explanation of the conflict, as well as the history of it, expressed in a single sentence. The judgment of its origin, and the part which the United States was in duty bound to play, which Page so succinctly put into words at this early date, represented the conviction from which he never departed, and furnished the directing thought of the advice which from this time he began to send the White House. Europe was engaged in the task of destroying civilization, as Page understood that term. Uppermost in his mind, of course, was his own conception of the only state of society that was really worthy of such a description—a society in which the average man had the fullest opportunity to participate in the enlightenments and satisfactions of life, and to develop the capacity and the character with which nature had endowed him. It was his definition of democracy—already set forth in sufficient detail. In his mind the leading British statesmen of the day—Grey, Asquith, Lloyd George—were all, in varying degrees, interested in promoting this new ideal. It was not perhaps so clearly defined in their minds as in Page's for it was not a phenomenon with which they were so familiar, but recent British legislation and the legislative programme that had been planned for the next few years were evidence enough that the new time was approaching. Against this belief in the dignity and supremacy of the common man and woman was the mediæval idea—that society consisted of a minority of emperors and kings and noblemen and military chieftains and diplomats, with a few scholars and artists and writers and statesmen to give it brilliancy and charm, and that the rôle of the masses was to serve as silent workers and taxpayers in peace, and as soldiers and cannon fodder in war. Page saw in the struggle so brutally precipitated in Europe the mortal conflict of these two opposing views. It was, to use another of his expressive phrases, "The clash of systems." The European crisis gave a strange and epic consistency to Page's life. Little had he imagined in the days when he was struggling for the betterment of the masses in the South, and especially in his own North Carolina, that he would ever witness the testing of his ideas on a stage of these titanic proportions. To understand completely the thoughts now framing in his mind we should go back once more to his early years—to that conception of popular education which Page himself evolved when little more than a boy at Johns Hopkins University; to his efforts to make the aristocratic classes of the South, just emerging from the Civil War, reorganize their politics and society on the basis of individual development; to the angry wars he had led against privilege and caste; to his campaigns for sanitation, for modern agriculture, for popular participation in the comforts of country life; for everything, indeed, which lightened the existence of the common people. This was the "system" to the spread of which Page had devoted all his energies as editor and public man; this was the "system" for which Great Britain and France were now contending; and this the "system" which, entrenched in the mud in France and prepared to sacrifice its last man and its last penny, was engaged in its final battle against the aristocratic ideal. With Page's background, any other attitude than sympathy with the Allies would have been grotesque. That America could take any other position would seem a trifling with its own history. Probably Page saw this question more clearly than any other observer then in London. The destruction of militarism, the freeing of Europe from a danger that had overshrouded the Continent for forty years, were perhaps the goals most immediately in the minds of the peoples that were fighting the German Empire. Yet Page saw beyond the issues of the hour; the victory of Germany, he knew, meant the postponement, for an indefinite period, of any chance of the "freeing" of European men. The destruction of democracy was an essential part of the creed of Kaiserism, and Germany was determined to destroy it not only within the borders of Germany and Austria-Hungary, but everywhere in the world. Should the Central Empires prevail, the day of Lloyd George's "cottage man" would certainly lie far in the misty future. The recently published memoirs of Lord Grey show that that statesman understood the struggle in a similar sense, though it is hardly to be expected that the question should frame itself as concretely in his mind as in that of Page. Himself a member of an ancient and historic family, the Foreign Secretary was not a democrat to the same degree as Page; but he had always been an advanced Liberal, a worthy offshoot of the same stock as that Earl Grey who, in 1832, carried through Parliament the Reform Bill.

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[1] This letter is printed from a copy in Page's papers. The original does not appear in the President's file.

Lord Grey, in his "Twenty-five Years," has stated the issue of the World War in terms very like those used by Page at the beginning. "It was a great struggle," he says, "between the Kultur that stood for militarism and the free democratic ideal. . . . It was the perception of this, whether consciously or unconsciously perceived, that brought the United States into the war."

Page naturally believed that, in setting forth the European issue in this form to President Wilson, he would have an appreciative listener. Democracy had been the Wilsonian purpose from his student days. His whole political career had rested upon the right of the masses to spiritual and material development. This had been the main thought in his campaigns for the governorship of New Jersey and for the Presidency. Even as an educator Wilson had advocated the same principles: he had split Princeton University into two armed camps over the question of putting all students on the same democratic level. His writings likewise contain eloquent pleas for the same cause. This was the enthusiasm in Wilson that had enlisted Page's sympathy in his political fortunes and induced him to become one of his earliest and most effective supporters. Not unnaturally, therefore, Page, in letters and telegrams, insisted on this interpretation of the convulsive European scene. Not to take this stand, Page thought, would be to miss the whole point of the war.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
August 23, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

It has been impossible to write lately, except by telegraph. I have been kept at work from the time I waked till twelve or one or two o'clock every night this fortnight, every minute of the time. I have seen to it—first, that no diplomatic mistake should be made in this delicate situation; secondly, that the organization and measures for helping our stranded people were energetic and right; thirdly, that the embassy work proper was done when the volume of it was suddenly multiplied by ten. As I look back on this fortnight, all these tasks, I think, have been done—thanks, let me say at once, to the staff and to the very able and generous help of Americans of ability who conducted the American Relief Committee. I shall report *in extenso* on these.

The thing of great and lasting importance of course is that the diplomatic work proper be done without error and without fumbling. When this involves direct dealing with four governments every day—well, I keep a straight path, a head not bothered with details, I get advice, and—follow my own judgment. The saving fact is (and the importance of this cannot be exaggerated) that I have dealt so candidly and frankly with Sir Edward Grey and so completely given him my confidence that his candour and confidence in me are now my shield and buckler. I could suggest no change in this relation. I have had conferences with him nearly every day these three weeks. I think he has told me every fact at every stage in this troublesome journey so far. I have seen this singularly self-contained, unemotional man weep in talking with me; I have seen him broken with care and lack of sleep—weighed down with an indescribable burden; and I have seen him roused with indignation, with a confident and invincible air. He could not be more frank or more friendly if I had known him always. That such a man should be in his post now is the first of our pieces of good fortune here. . . .

The dark shadow moves over the map of the continent bringing political, economic, and spiritual ruin; and again, I think, England will save Europe from itself. Turning from the awful spectacle on land and sea, it is inspiring to watch this nation—sad, dead-in-earnest, resolute, united—not a dissenting voice—silent. It will spend all its treasure and give all its men, if need be. I have never seen such grim resolution. They trust us to play our part of neutrality with scrupulous exactness and they know we will do it. It will be a hard fight, an experience of unimagined horrors. I am glad the chance comes to me to show our attitude—it calls for steadiness, clearness, frankness. These are not flashy qualities, being the brood rather of wisdom and common sense.

Yours most heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London.
September 6, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

In those rushing days of a month ago when nobody here had time to catch his breath, of course I knew event after event as they took place—many events before they happened. There was no time to make a record or to write even to you, and of course you have been as much occupied as I have been—and more. I do not know, therefore, how closely you have kept informed of the causes of the war, of the case of each belligerent, of the inner meaning of it all.

I have given the general subject of German-English rivalry—which has fast become Prussian hatred and English distrust these ten years—I have given it as serious study as I could since I was here and (for a brief time) in Germany six years ago. A war between them has ever since then seemed to me inevitable—an early war, a war within my lifetime—except in moods when I shared the feeling of most men, that perhaps the terrible modern engines of destruction would, at the last moment, cause every nation to desist. As I became acquainted with some of the literature of Prussian militarism, I recall I wrote down several years ago in a fitful diary that I have kept, the conviction that Italy, France, Spain, Holland, and England had each had its day of primacy in Europe and that Prussia would not content itself till it, too, had tried. Then, after I came here and began to get some glimpses into the way great national policies were made, this definite Prussian determination became clearer; and little by little I got knowledge of the Prussian bureaucracy's methods—got glimpses from other than British sources. Their recent diplomacy has been—simply a lie, all bent on making ready themselves and on keeping other nations from getting ready. Their "publicity" campaign throughout the world has become clear to all men who know the publishing and newspaper work of the world. I know an American whom the Prussian Foreign Office sought deliberately to bribe to affect public opinion in the United States. When House's plan[1] first came to me, I wrote him a letter to show the utter futility of his idea. The next day I wisely burnt it, because it was foolish, perhaps wicked, to discourage any such effort made by anybody; and I sent him another letter instead. Sir Edward Grey never told me in so many words that he regarded it as his life work to prevent such a war; but as events have unfolded themselves this has become plain. And it is equally plain to me that for years he has worked with a diminishing hope. Not only British soldiers—men like Roberts and Kitchener—and British sailors—men like Jellicoe and Fisher—but English and American and French students of modern history and modern politics—men like the late Professor Cramb of the University of London—have seen no way to avoid it.

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[1] The plan for an agreement between the United States, Germany, and Great Britain that would prevent war. See Volume I, Chapter IX.

The "cult of valour"—a sort of religion of military force—captured Prussia, scholars and all. It makes one revise one's values of sheer scholarship.

I have tried in my own mind to detach myself from the English and from the English point of view. Well, of course, the French have been aware of the danger. So have the Belgians and the Dutch. A distinguished and thoughtful Dutchman told me six years ago almost what has happened this past month.

I believe it literally true that the "cult of valour" which is the modern name of sheer force—force that really believes that might, however brutal, is right—is driving these militarists mad: their incomprehensible and incalculable big-head is sheer madness. It is another case of Napoleon—even more brutal: a dream of universal conquest. Sir Edward remarked to me the other day that if this thing succeeds, Europe will become a place in which life will not be worth living: "the only place worth living in will be the United States—till it attacks that, as it would." That seems to me literally true.

I see no hope of the world's going on towards ends and ideals that we value except on the hypothesis that Prussian militarism be utterly cut out, as surgeons cut out a cancer. And the Allies will do it—must do it, to live. It would dash our Monroe Doctrine to the ground. It would even invade the United States in time.

There are many objectionable things that will accompany its defeat under present circumstances, such as the prominence of Russia as one of the victors—itself a menace in the future—and the continuance of the warlike spirit in Japan, and the acquisition by England of still more colonies. But these are all lesser or less immediate evils.

Every revelation of German methods as the war goes on confirms all my fears and solidifies all my convictions about Prussian militarism and a war-lord monarchy. The terror and the danger of it are not even yet fully or generally realized.

Yours very heartily,
Walter H. Page.

Sir Edward Grey's speech	make the whole case very clear
The British "White Paper"	
The German "White Paper"	

P. S. London, September 8, 1914.

I see by this morning's papers that the Allies' declaration that none of them will make peace without the consent of all is understood by the American press. As I regard it, this makes the result of the war certain—there will be no compromise with the German system. England will fight and starve the Germans out if it takes years to do it—to a complete defeat. The war spirit, which was hard to awaken, is now completely aroused here. The German Empire and its military system are doomed. The only open question is the cost. It will cost hundreds of thousands of men and most of the treasure of Europe. This side of the world will be bankrupt but free.

W. H. P.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
September 22, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The more fully the whole recent diplomatic story of the war and of the events that preceded it comes out, the clearer it becomes here that the German military party had deliberately planned the practical conquest of the world; that it had won the German people (or a large part of them) to believe in this as a necessity; and that the military party firmly believed that they could do it; and that, believing in this programme as a necessity, they came to believe that any method whereby they could do this justified itself. The military party gave the whole people an extraordinary case of big-head. I find the evidence of these extraordinary facts incontrovertible. The English themselves go further than this in their conclusions—under the effects of war. But there is no need to go further to see that the English are not going to discuss peace except in Berlin. In other words, they will reject any terms that Germany will offer except on the basis of defeat. They are going to rid themselves and the rest of Europe of the menace that they have lived under for thirty years—a hostile military autocracy.

These are not a warlike people. They didn't wish to fight. In fact, the public took the war, after it had been declared, with indifference. It was thought for several weeks that the Government would have to conscript men to get enough. They were very slow in waking up. But now they can't find officers or quarters for the volunteer recruits, and you can't find an Englishman of any class who holds any opinion but that the war must go on till the Germans are completely disabled from continuing their military caste. All the resources of the Empire and all the men that they can get will be spent if they are needed to prevent another "assault on the continuity of civilization." For these reasons Mr. Straus's[1] peace activity was looked on here as a part of the German campaign to affect public opinion in the United States and as nothing else—as a move in the game of publicity to seem to put the responsibility for continuing the war on England, in spite of the fact that Germany had made no definite proposal whatever.

All the military men I see talk of a long war—from one to three years; and they think that it will be ended, when it ends, quite as much by starving the Germans as by fighting them. And England is preparing for an indefinite struggle, many talking even of three years. And one gets glimpses now and then of the quality that has made English history—that quality at work in these people. By sheer good luck I happen to have become pretty well acquainted with both Sir John French and Sir John Jellicoe. They are able and forcible men: I think anybody who knows them would say that. But six months ago nobody thought of them or spoke of them as great historic characters—as great heroes. But now the universal expectation is that they will play the parts of Wellington and Nelson; and if French saves his army and is in at the end, and if Jellicoe gets a chance at the German fleet, all this will come true. It'll be they who saved Europe and kept England free; they will be made peers; they will receive great residences and large grants and their families will become great families in the realm;

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[1] Oscar S. Straus, ex-Ambassador to Turkey, assured by Count Bernstorff that Germany was ready to make peace, was bringing pressure at this time on Secretary Bryan to this end. See Volume I, Chapter XIII.

and, more than that, the poets and the orators and the biographers will make them known, in heroic size, wherever English is read.

And you may be dead sure the story will be told well and, therefore, it will become history, and sung well, and therefore it will become literature. And the story will be the story of English freedom again saved and again broadened, of the Empire become bigger and very much more firmly knit—of India become really loyal and far better treated, of Ireland stripped of its grievance, of new African colonies to exploit and (more important yet) the common man of England claiming and getting more privileges and more power and a wider opportunity. These things are almost visible now. And, for us, in addition to an increase in our trade and financial power, we shall have the Monroe Doctrine still safe, as we should not have if Germany won.

All these things, in addition to the daily roll of the dead and the constant march of recruits and all such visible reminders of war, prevent us here from forgetting it for one moment—prevent us even from ever changing the subject. It bears down on one very hard. There comes a kind of weariness that drives one to long sleep, which is the only way to get away from it. London seems muffled—a queer sort of silence; and dark—all the bright lights are out at night; and resolute—there are not even the common routine gaieties: if anybody has a few friends in to dinner, it is never spoken of.

The diplomatic work betwixt Great Britain and our country is, as you know, not difficult: they play the game squarely; they are wholly courteous and sincere and even more than ever they value our friendship and sympathy. But I see Sir Edward Grey four or five times a week; he gives me his confidence; and we have only to keep strictly neutral. That is not hard to do here. Nor does the work of the German and Austrian Embassies cause difficulty; it is, on all sides, only the large volume of work, not its difficulty. We are beginning to see what the normal conditions of work will be so long as the war lasts and for a period after. The crowds of stranded Americans are gone—they come now in small groups, not in hundreds and thousands; the army men and paymasters will soon be gone; we are moving the offices from the obscure and undignified and dirty-beyond-cleaning old hole where they have been for twenty-nine years to a house (we have the whole house) which costs no more than the increased rental of the old offices, but which has three times the space. It will be the first dignified office we've ever had in London.

To go back to the war: Lord Kitchener told Colonel Squier, our Military Attaché, to-day, that the war would really begin next spring. He was not speaking in jest—there's no jest in Kitchener. Since England has only a small army they sent that over of course to help France. France will give the Germans the best tug they can this autumn and wear them down somewhat, and Russia will finish Austria. Meantime England will drill a million, perhaps a million and a half men, and have them as a fresh army in the spring. I shouldn't wonder if Kitchener himself will take command; and these are the fellows who will take Berlin; and Kitchener, if he go, will dictate the terms of peace; it'll be an English (not a French or a Russian) victory! These English are the only people in Europe who have the habit of success and who know the art of managing great things. Look also at their diplomacy. Sir Edward Grey was broken-hearted when he could no longer keep peace. But when war came Russia and France were already engaged before England went in; and yet it is primarily a war between England and Germany. Of the German allies, one did not come in and the other is already beaten. Of the English allies—so far they are doing practically all the fighting and England will come in at the end as victor! In other words, Grey and Kitchener are more than a match for the whole continent of statesmen and soldiers.

Now since it is essential to modern progress that this brutal, big-headed, stupid military caste in Germany be rooted up—nobody can live in security till it is—and since the English have the one great fleet and will have a great army, and since it has Grey and Kitchener and French and Jellicoe and English character and endurance behind them—peace-talk now is old women's prattle or else it is insincere and is "springes to catch woodcock"—a part of the German tactics.

It staggers one's reasoning powers to think back over the last thirty years, and it balks the imagination to try to think forward. The Germans, when as a boy I went to Berlin,[1] were a philosophical, studious, mystical, musical folk with a simplicity of mind and with no ambition to conquer the earth—to win a place in the sun. Their great war machine and their "cult of valour" were just beginning. Their writers who have completely changed their thought and aims—or expressed this change of thought and aims—were just beginning to write. It is a frightful thing to think how a war party may change a whole nation in three decades. In the meantime England is the same as in other great crises, the leader, making other nations do much of her work, forgetting for the time her domestic differences, leaping from the lap of luxury into the battle trenches, tough and silent and grim. The duchesses (who, you will recall, spoiled Lowell)[1] are now working in hospitals; the great houses are taking in Belgian refugees—entertaining and caring for that whole buffer nation; the noble ladies come to see me to ask if I can get word of their dead or wounded sons or brothers or husbands, and they come dry-eyed and self-possessed with a bearing that Spartan women would have envied. This is the price they pay for Empire. England not only will gain territory and power and trade and even greater dominion at sea, she will also toughen her breed and make literature of the experience. The Germans deserve the fate that awaits them for their sheer stupidity in not understanding this.

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[1] Page (aged 22) spent the larger part of the summer of 1877 in Germany. He was at the time a fellow of Johns Hopkins University.

The liberalization of Europe will follow. But, her strong enemy overcome, Great Britain will not so greatly need our friendship; and, when clashes of interests come, we shall need firmness. She doesn't become arrogant with success; she simply becomes more positive and more energetic. There never came so good a time to put our foreign service, at home and abroad, on a firm, liberal, and uniformly efficient basis—from the Department of State to the humblest consul. We have some wonderfully good men—wonderfully, as this stress is showing. But we have also in places the feeblest sort of touch. All news of both sorts comes to London. This war is showing how we are a part of the great world whether we wish to be or not. Could the next Congress not be induced to have a study made of the foreign service of other great states compared with ours?

Yours very heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

P. S. The reports of peace meetings in the United States as they have appeared in the London papers the last day or two produce the impression here of muttonheaded victims of German special pleaders.

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[1] James Russell Lowell, American Minister to Great Britain, 1880–1885

This thought grows on me the more I ponder this world-changing series of events—that, when the war is ended, nothing will be precisely as it was before, not even England. England will not only be more powerful, but she will be under very definite bonds to—Russia and Japan. Russia and Japan, therefore, will be different. We shall need a new sort of diplomatic force in most parts of the world; we shall need somehow to wake up the American public to realize that our isolation is gone and that our perfunctory diplomatic work, which has done well enough in many places in the past, will not do anywhere in the future; and a stronger navy? There simply is no end to the changes that are coming.

W. H. P.

CHAPTER VI

HOW PAGE WOULD HAVE ENDED THE WAR—IN 1914

I

WHAT part had the United States to play in this European conflict? To most Americans, surveying Europe in September, 1914, the idea that their country had any responsibility would have seemed grotesque. Nothing was apparently further removed from the duties of the American continent. At that time Americans regarded the war as exclusively the product of European vices—a militarism that had no counterpart in their own country, a tangle of dynasties and treaties and alliances which few Americans, even of the educated classes, understood, and a welter of racial hatreds and economic jealousies that had no reality in the American mind. What possible concern had free and distant America with such a strange world and such extraneous ambitions? The American of those days was interested and horrified, but detached; had he been told that the foremost statesmen of Europe looked upon his country as the decisive element in determining the result, his astonishment would have known no bounds. He had lived a quiet existence for nearly a century and a half, entirely disassociated from the thoughts and forces that inspired European life, busily engaged constructing his own democratic society, the European continent, in his view, representing the starting point of his culture and his institutions, but representing also a place his forefathers had abandoned, mainly to escape the very evils which had now plunged it into this great war. Whoever or whatever might be responsible for this mighty upheaval—and in this discussion the American did evince much interest—one fact at least was clear, and that was the innocence of his own country.

Yet, careless of Europe as America might be, the inexorable working of political and economic forces was something which the most remote Republic could not escape. And these forces, active through a hundred years, had steadily created for the United States a dominant interest in the European war, real, inescapable, for all that Americans were completely unconscious of it. Americans for a century and more had heard and read of a European phenomenon rather vaguely known as the "Balance of Power." This represented an attempt to describe the tendency of the European countries to ally themselves in two groups, more or less equally "balanced" in population, resources, and diplomatic and military strength. For centuries Europe had lived in the fear that some one nation, or a certain group of nations, would achieve a predominant position, and so become powerful enough to subject the Continent to control. The several attempts to establish such a European hegemony—by Charles V, by Louis XIV, and by Napoleon—proved that this fear was not a groundless one, and the persistence with which the opposing combination was always formed to defeat such ambitions and reëstablish the equilibrium, seemed almost like the operation of natural law. The part that Great Britain held in these crises had been a source of pride to that nation itself and of envy and criticism to its rivals. The British practice, it was said, was to hold aloof from either group of nations, always prepared, in the case of war, to cast its support—necessarily decisive—on the side that best promoted its interests. Whether this is an accurate description of history is a point that may be disputed; the fact that is sufficiently plain, however, is that whether such a situation had prevailed in previous great European crises it certainly did not prevail in 1914. Great Britain may have possessed the determining influence in the War of the Spanish Succession, and, a hundred years afterward, in the Napoleonic struggle, but she did not hold such a preëminent position in August, 1914. When the British Empire joined forces with France and Russia, it had not tipped the "balance" in favour of the Allies; instead, it had really created a new balance, or, stated in more practical terms, it had produced an apparently insuperable military deadlock. The study of Page's correspondence, and of his conversations and negotiations with British statesmen, discloses that, from August 4, 1914, to April 6, 1917—the date the United States declared war—there was only one possible outcome of the military conflict, and that was an exhausting stalemate. One of the few incontrovertible facts about the World War, however, is that, from the end of the battle of the Marne until American intervention, neither the Allies nor the Germans had any chance of victory. The two sides were rigidly locked in the most terrible death grapple of history, and from this only one force could free them. That force was the United States.

In the great historic perspective this is only another way of saying that the United States, unconsciously to itself, had succeeded to the position traditionally filled for several centuries by Great Britain. The latter country, by combining her strength with France and Russia, had accomplished nothing except to produce a "balance" against the alliance of the Central Powers. The United States, by taking a decisive stand on one side or the other, could determine the result. Certain European statesmen and military leaders saw this clearly, even before military operations began; the American mind, however, was exceedingly slow to grasp it. Though we are not regarded by foreigners as especially backward in appreciating our importance in the world, we had never practically discerned how important we really were. Our lack of interest in European affairs, our ignorance of European diplomacy, and our natural revulsion from the aspirations that governed so much of European history, inevitably obscured our vision. Moreover, the forces that made the American position such a critical one were less spectacular, and, consequently, less obvious, than those that had previously determined great events. How could a nation that had no army, no navy, no martial spirit, no diplomacy in the European sense, no foreign policy, and little interest in anything that happened outside its own borders, imagine itself marked for a decisive rôle amid the gigantic military camps and the adroit statesmanship of Europe? The answer was to be found in the furnaces of Pittsburgh, in the fires of Bethlehem, and in such modern developments as the United States Steel Corporation, the Ford Motor Company, Standard Oil, and our great national industry, for it was nothing else, of food production. While Europe had been constructing its armies, its navies, and its alliances, and exhausting the resources of its people in the process, this country—without the slightest thought of military values—had constructed the greatest industrial machine the world had ever known. It was upon these new facts that the issue was to depend. Not the nation that had the largest population, the most heroic soldiers, and the ablest leadership, would necessarily bear off the victory, essential as these were; the nation that, in addition to these qualities, or a share of them, possessed the most coal, the most copper, the most cotton, the most iron, controlled the really indisputable materials of success. Herein the United States surpassed all peoples. It was early said that the course of the European war would depend largely upon steel; the fact that the United States produced more steel than all the rest of the world combined in itself indicated the part that this country could play.

Irrespective of any personal qualities, therefore, Page, at the outbreak of war, was the most important figure in the diplomatic situation. He held this position because he represented the power whose course could determine the outcome. If the United States allied itself with the Entente, then the Entente would win; if it joined hands with the Central Powers, the result would be a German victory; if it remained consistently neutral, then there could be no triumph for either side, but a patched-up truce after a long and bloody deadlock. Moreover, the United States was the only neutral power that counted for much in the diplomatic game. The decisions of the European countries not already engaged in the struggle would depend entirely upon military events; the probable course of Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, and Rumania was a matter with which statesmen had nothing to do: only the armies in the field could influence their action. But diplomacy might count for much in influencing the American decision; and Page's personal attitude, and his method of handling the pending questions and disputes, might have the most momentous consequences. Lord Grey, British Foreign Secretary from 1905 to 1916, has laid the greatest stress upon this pivotal character of the American position. Describing his policy in these early days he says: "The United States must be considered in a category by

Drawing room at 6 Grosvenor Square, the London residence of Ambassador Walter H. Page

Sir William Tyrrell, Private Secretary to Sir Edward Grey, 1907–1915, Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs itself. That country was so powerful that it could not be affected in its sympathy or policy by the course of the war. The United States were able to do whatever they felt to be right or desirable without fear of the consequences. They were a factor so potentially important, that their attitude might be decisive in deciding the war in favour of either set of belligerents." "Blockade of Germany," he adds, "was essential to the victory of the Allies, but the ill will of the United States meant their certain defeat." The great object of British diplomacy from the first was, therefore, to obtain the support of this country. "Germany and Austria," says Grey, "were self-supporting in the high supply of munitions. The Allies soon became dependent for an adequate supply upon the United States. If we quarrelled with the United States we could not get that supply. It was better therefore to carry on the war without blockade, if need be, than to incur a break with the United States about contraband and thereby deprive the Allies of the resources necessary to carry on the war at all with any chance of success. The object of diplomacy therefore was to secure the maximum of blockade that could be forced without a rupture with the United States. . . . There was one mistake in diplomacy that, if made, would have been fatal to the cause of the Allies. This capital mistake their diplomacy did not make, but carefully avoided. This mistake would have been a breach with the United States, not necessarily a rupture, but a state of things that provoked American interference with the blockade, or an embargo on exports of munitions from the United States. This capital mistake of a breach with the United States, Germany did make. The answer therefore to the question why allied diplomacy did not lose the war is because in Europe diplomacy counted for little and outside Europe Germany's diplomacy was worse than that of the Allies."[1]

Whether Sir Edward Grey could succeed in this task of keeping the United States on the side of the Allies would evidently depend to a large extent upon the nature of his relations with the American Ambassador. Enough has already been printed to make plain the nature of those relations. Page's policy from the first was clear and consistent. The issue of the war, as he at once explained it to President Wilson, was the preservation and extension of democratic civilization. This issue being so unmistakably drawn, the support, at least the sympathetic support, of the United States must necessarily be cast on the side of the Allies. The technical situation, so far as the blockade was concerned, has been duly described in a previous volume; and this new correspondence merely makes stronger the conclusions already set forth. At first, American participation in the war, as a military ally, Page hardly considered; he did believe, however, that the United States should assist the cause to the extent of accepting Britain's practice in the blockade. But there were other agencies at work that seemed likely to destroy the efforts of the American Ambassador and the Foreign Secretary. In many ways the British naval and military leaders were almost as fatuous as their counterparts in Germany. These chieftains were impatient of anything that interfered with their warlike proceedings. Their attitude was not wise, though it was not unnatural, for they understood, even more clearly than the statesmen, the desperate character of their task, and could not restrain themselves when certain cargoes, regarded as indispensable to Germany, kept passing from the United

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[1] "Twenty-five Years," by Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Chapter XXV.

States to the enemy. To prevent this, they were apparently prepared to go to extremes that would have wrecked Grey's and Page's diplomacy at the start, made the United States an enemy and lost the war for the Allies. In Germany the control of diplomacy was from the first in the hands of the military party, and the result, so far as the United States was concerned, is a matter of history. In Great Britain, the conduct of foreign affairs remained throughout the war in the hands of the civilian Cabinet. Perhaps never has there been such a splendid justification of the Anglo-American principle of making the army and navy subservient to the civil power. That the contrary system which, in the end, proved fatal to the Central Powers, at one time endangered the fortunes of Britain the following letter shows.

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
August 25, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Officials in the Admiralty Office yesterday discussed with Symington, our naval attaché, their possible action in case of serious reverses on land or sea. They said that England might find herself in a desperate struggle for existence. Then the War Office and the Admiralty might take over the management of foreign relations and practically everything else, as they have already done in Germany and France. Then, to prevent Germany from receiving food or other help, they might issue a proclamation that neutrals must not trade with Germany, and they would be prepared, if necessary, to go to war with any neutral power, even the United States, that should disregard such a proclamation. In other words, in extreme need, they might practically forbid neutrality.

Symington asked if they had any complaint to make now—any specific case—against the United States. Their answer was emphatically No. They said they were discussing only possible extreme policies to which untoward events might drive them. They are wholly pleased with the strict neutral attitude of our government now.

I thought this too important (as showing a state of mind) to pass over in silence and too improbable to treat with undue concern. I decided to treat it with straightforward frankness, which is the best cue that I have found in diplomacy or in life in general; and I informally called Sir Edward Grey's attention to it. He thanked me for my frankness and reminded me that he and not the Admiralty is the spokesman for the Government.

"Quite an unnecessary reminder, Sir Edward," said I.

He disclaimed all that the Admiralty men had said to Symington.

"That is a Cabinet matter, not an Admiralty matter, and the Cabinet has never thought of such a thing."

This is, I am sure, quite true; but the Admiralty men were discussing a conceivable state of things wherein the Cabinet would be out of commission.

Sir Edward intimated a wish that Symington should not report this to Washington. I have kept it quiet here, of course, and I report it to you only. I regard it as professional navy talk, and I attach importance to it only as a reminder that the time and conditions of real stress are not yet come. As such a reminder it may be worth while to note in passing. The Continent is every day becoming a slaughter house, and the sea may presently contain the hulks of many dreadnaughts and many dead men. The Germans *may* take Paris: there is already a distinct fear of this here. These events would bring a panic here—perhaps a world-wide panic. Now this naval talk is a premonition of this state of mind. But, when such a panic comes, our part will be to keep very cool. I assure you we are keeping cool and silent here. And, in any event, I am very sure England will not do so supremely foolish a thing as to give us cause of offense.

W. H. P.

It was not only Commander Symington, the American naval attaché, who was having a first-hand experience with the somewhat rough-and-ready methods of Britain's warriors. Colonel George O. Squier—a name that will figure conspicuously in a future chapter—was also learning that the War Office cared more for winning than for the theoretical notions of international lawyers and statesmen. The proposition made Colonel Squier was not quite so radical as the one suggested to Commander Symington, but it had its startling aspects.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
October 6, 1914.

Dear Mr. President:

The Chief of Ordnance of the British Army (Major-General Sir S. B. Von Donop, K. C. B., Master General of the Ordnance, War Office, Whitehall) yesterday approached Colonel Squier, our military attaché, with this question: whether Squier thought there would be any use in sounding our government on the possibility of procuring from it, or from anybody in the United States, 100,000 to 150,000 Springfield rifles and 5,000,000 rounds of ammunition. Squier, of course, intimated his personal doubts and kept the conversation on a purely tentative and personal basis, saying, however, that of course that was a diplomatic rather than a purely military question; and he has brought it to me. I have told him to leave it just where it is and not to say that he has put the question to me at all unless he be asked to do so. If he be asked to do so, he can give my opinion that there is no use to sound our government. If that do not satisfy his questioner, Squier must tell him that the way to approach our government is through the Foreign Office. I think we shall hear no more about it, and I am sure the Foreign Office will never present such a question—certainly not unless the British cause come to some wholly desperate state such as the successful invasion of England, the complete crippling of the British fleet, and the defeat of the Allied Army on the Continent—any one of which, of course, now seems wholly improbable. Until some such catastrophe come, neither the Cabinet nor Sir Edward Grey would for a moment even consider making such a request. I don't believe they know that any such question has been put to Squier. It is very like Kitchener to have such a "feeler" put forward. His directness and "cheek" are amazing—very soldier-like and more. That man has a way of going after what he wants that takes your breath away. He is capable of forgetting that there is a Cabinet, a Government, a Parliament, a declaration of neutrality; he is capable of forgetting everything except that there is an enemy. This incident is, I am sure, a flash of Kitchener's forgetfulness—nothing more; and, unless I hear from you to the contrary, it will rest where it is or at most go one step further, and Squier will intimate my opinion that such "sounding" had better not be made.

Officially you know nothing about this—and you'll never hear of it officially—unless some great catastrophe come and they fear the actual conquest of England. But the question is interesting because it reveals the English unpreparedness on land. Kitchener has frankly said more than once that he didn't have guns or equipment for his new army of a million men. They've got to make 'em in six months—and somehow or other they will.

The question is interesting for another very remote reason: suppose England and English civilization and all that England stands for should be in danger of the fate that has overtaken Belgium—the German Army on these shores—what then? This job done, it would be our turn next: Belgium, France, England, the United States, all German provinces, the war lord "in the sun"—what then? Such a thing isn't going to happen, for England is going to save us from it. But, if danger of this should seem imminent, you may tell the President of the United States that his declaration of neutrality would be in danger of being run over by the people of the United States. Already I have a drawer full of letters from English folk—many of them cranks and some of them anonymous—asking why the United States doesn't do its duty and come to England's aid. I never answer such letters of course; and the whole staff of the Embassy is scrupulous to the *n*th degree not to say, and more especially never to write, a word that can be construed even by a forced interpretation into an expression of opinion or favour.

And you would be surprised to know how carefully we are obliged to walk this tight rope. For example: I do not dare send a letter from a German here to anybody in Germany, although thousands of them are sent to us. Very well, what is sauce for your German must be sauce also for your Englishman; and, when high and big Englishmen come and say that their own government informs them that I can send letters for them to their invalids at German health resorts or to their sons in German prisons, "No," say I. "Would you have me also send letters from your imprisoned Germans here to their influential friends in Germany?" I must say they act very decently about it when the case is squarely put to them. I never knew and no man brought up in American life would believe the degree to which spy work is carried. There is a rumour going around that a servant in the household of Prince Louis of Battenberg (whose wife is one of Queen Victoria's granddaughters) informed the Germans where the English cruisers were that were blown up by German submarines;[1] and it has been printed in the newspapers that *somebody* in England gave this information. A trusted German named Karow was, with the consent of the British Government, left in the German Embassy here. He was the only man left who knew the house and knew a thousand useful and necessary things. One day he wrote a letter to a friend in Germany—a perfectly harmless letter—and gave it to a woman who had got permission to go home. She foolishly sewed it in her frock, and when she was searched of course the letter was discovered. All this was duly presented to me. But the upshot of it all is that Karow, poor fool, is in a detention camp of suspect Germans. The English Government would rather feed him till the war ends than take the risk of his sending some sort of useful information. Everybody's a spy. In one of the law courts the other day an amazing story of organized espionage was narrated—things that are incredible to straightforward, simple folk like us. Having spent two months in getting Americans to go home, I'm now trying to get this government to let Germans and Austrians go. I run soup kitchens and outdoor relief and the Lord knows what for them. These governments have given me together

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[1] The *Hague*, the *Cressy*, and the *Aboukir*, torpedoed in the North Sea on September 22, 1914.

$75,000 to keep these people alive. The English detectives find spies among them all the time and *they* feed 'em thereafter in some detention pen or other. There's an English lady of high degree who is building a house in Dresden. The contractors must have their money, else they'll have her arrested. Her father makes an agreement with the British Government that the money may leave this kingdom provided the American Ambassador will send it. This touching confidence in the American Ambassador's honour and prudence sometimes becomes quite burdensome. The old Lord brings me his check for $40,000, and I write to the German Government, saying the contractors will get their money if they do not arrest the lady. Then in the safe with this check and a dozen more is the key to the concealed safe in the German Embassy wherein the Princess's[1] jewels were thrown pell-mell before she went away. I am told $100,000 worth at least. Did she leave them because she regarded them safer here than in Berlin? I can only conjecture, for I've never heard a word from the Ambassador or his wife. It's a simple everyday fact that we live here in a world of mysteries. . . . . . .

Yours heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
October 15, 1914.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

There is every indication that the war is just begun. The horrors of it and the probable duration of it and the possible consequences of it nobody but the men who have the task in hand seems yet to realize. Certainly the public and the press of this kingdom do not yet realize it, and I am sure that the public and the press of the United States come far short of realizing it. England's got to win it and will win it. I say England, because it is essentially a war between England and Germany. Germany would whip both France and Russia and, if England had remained neutral, Germany would then have made war on her. Now Germany is just beginning her land war. Her first calculation—to capture Paris, to levy an enormous tribute and thus to put France out of the game—miscarried; but it may be only postponed. But, if she never get to Paris, she can fight in strongly fortified positions till her food is completely given out—one year, two years, perhaps longer. She now has Belgium. She is likely soon to have Holland—as soon as she has got all the supplies thro' Holland that she needs or can get. Then Holland will probably join her—under threat of the fate that has befallen Belgium. With the Belgian coast, what may Zeppelins do to London within a year? It's conceivable, though not probable, that Zeppelins and submarines may do much hurt to the British fleet. Italy will come with the Allies whenever they win a hopeful victory. England will not give up unless she is utterly beaten: she can't, else she will disappear. Yet she has no army. She'll have one next spring. Then the land war will begin. That's the situation. And England will not talk or think of peace till she's annihilated or has completely whipped the Germans. The British Empire would be gone if she did. The question is: a military autocracy over Europe, or England's position unimpaired. Either Germany or England must be the supreme power in Europe—nothing less than a decision of this question will end the war.

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[1] Princess Lichnowsky, wife of the German Ambassador.

Yet even this does not hint of its grimness. In France, where the two great armies have been fighting without moving far for a month, dead men lie so thick in places that when soldiers lift their heads from the trenches to shoot, the smell overcomes them. Both sides fire on Red Cross squads who would rescue the wounded, and the wounded in consequence lie there and die by the thousand. Belgium is for the time wiped off the map, and all accounts agree that such terror was never inspired in any population before in the world. Meantime the German press and Germany's learned men have become so full of bitter hatred of England and are so diffusing it through the population that few Germans now living will in any event ever regard anything English with any feeling less than hatred; and the English, far less bitter personally, are yet firmly resolved to cut out Prussian war culture as one would cut out a cancer. They'll send every man and spend every shilling, if necessary, and you can see their feeling rising every week. It needs only the destruction of a few more British ships or the dropping of a Zeppelin bomb on London to make a British army of 2,000,000 men.

The ferocity of it, which visibly becomes greater every week, passes anything felt by any men in modern times. It's a death grapple. All preceding mere "wars" are not in the same class of events. It means the extermination, not of the people of either nation, but the utter extermination of the system of either one or the other—English free institutions or German military autocracy. But in fact the men of both nations will be more nearly exterminated than anybody yet realizes.

Of course, I don't know what you know of this unprecedented fierceness or what is known about it in the United States. But if the British public do not yet realize it—are not yet conscious of all that is at stake—I fancy that few men 3,000 miles away realize it. The simple truth is, it *is* unbelievable. I see indications that it is not in the least understood in many quarters. Take, for instance, the resolution passed by the Pan-American Union, which we received by telegraph to-day, asking for peace. "If England lives, who dies?" And, if England dies, who lives? That's their mood; and this resolution reads here like a Sunday-school resolution passed in Kansas requesting cruel Vesuvius to cease its eruption, which destroys villages of innocent people. This is a vast eruption—a world-changing clash of systems: not a "war," as we have hitherto understood the word, but a sort of crash of worlds. If England win, the world will be ruled by English institutions and ideas and ideals and those ideas and ideals that are English-sprung. If Germany win, the war lord will set out to bestride the world, and we shall have big armies and big navies indefinitely and periodical great conflicts. The Monroe Doctrine will be less than a scrap of paper—the mere faded breath of a dead man.

The men who have this colossal undertaking in hand feel its magnitude and seriousness. The two ablest of them show it in different ways. Grey, who had made it his life work to prevent it, grows a year older every month. Anderson,[1] who went with me the other day to the Foreign Office to a conference on our shipping controversy, and who sees Sir Edward less often than I see him and consequently notices changes in his appearance more clearly, remarked as we came away that he had "a Lincoln look"; and so he has. Kitchener, the imperturbable, the man of colossal "cheek," affects an unnatural calmness—even an unconcern—while he works like a Titan. These men are lonely, sad, remote, feigning their old-time joy in life and work, and keeping up, as far as they can, their old-time manner, when all the while they are conscious that life means something different from what it ever meant before. You can see as you talk with them that their manner and speech are merely reminiscent of their old selves: they have entered a new stage of responsibility; they have a new measure of life, of hope, of work; and they are perfectly capable of yawning, after you have gone, and saying to themselves, "Oh, well, what does it matter now? What does anything matter?" Then you can imagine them shaking themselves together and taking a new turn at the wheel, with a grim, weary smile—at life. For death is a daily piece of news to them—the death of kinsmen, of friends, of companions, and they wonder whether they may not live to see the death of England and the eclipse of English civilization. They think not in terms of mere "war," but in terms of the possible death of civilization—a million men, perhaps, already dead, many of them rotten, unburied, in France and Austria. Red Cross and coffins and quiet graves or affectionate farewells—there are not enough of these to count: shells and acres of bloated human bodies, careless of sun or rain, giving only stench—a hundred miles of them in each of three places—and inviting pestilence. All this for the clash of systems! I myself, as detached from it as a man here can be, often find myself, when I ought to be in bed, sitting alone silently looking into the dying fire, not only thinking but dumbly brooding on it, wondering in what world I live. For it is not the same world it was last July—nothing is the same. All one's measures and centres of reference are different; and the people you meet have changed; and all talk somehow seems hollow. You wonder yourself if you mean what you say, for you are all the time readjusting yourself to some great shock of things that has hitherto seemed incredible. . . .

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[1] Chandler P. Anderson, legal adviser of the American Embassy in London.

II

At times Page reflects the view generally held by the public, and by certain of the official classes, that the Allies could ultimately win a victory; at other times, however, he transmits the conviction of the military chieftains, that such a victory is impossible. Such expressions involve no contradictions; they merely echo the changing opinions and hopes of the time—convictions and emotions that varied from day to day, according as events had given grounds for optimism or despair. The British and the French press, in the autumn and winter of 1914–15, displayed even more poignantly these varying moods. At times they discussed the war in terms that assumed, as the inevitable outcome, a triumph for the Entente; at other times their pages hardly concealed the despair that too often filled the popular mind. The military leaders, however, whose opinions at that time did not have a public airing, made no secret of their apprehensions when confidentially discussing the outlook with Page. They regarded the situation as a hopeless stalemate. At least, this was the judgment of the highest British authority, the Commander of the British forces, Sir John French. It appears from the following letter that he sent a message to this effect directly to Page.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
October 29, 1914.

My dear Mr. President:

I have a mortal fear of wearing you weary with my letters—tho' you wouldn't believe it from the number that I write or from their length. I have these months only the hours around midnight to write anything; and it's come to be a joke in my household—that when I'm writing anything I'm writing to you. To-night I write down the following while it is fresh in my mind:

To-day I had luncheon with the particular friend[1] of General Sir John French, in French's house here (these two men live together), and with a military member of French's staff. Both these came from his headquarters in France yesterday. I fancy I wrote you that in my various activities here to find my proper orientation, I happened to become pretty well acquainted with the General (nobody dreaming then of a war). We came to know one another well enough to exchange birthday greetings, etc., and since he has been in France he has several times directed members of his staff who were coming on errands to London "to step in and give my greetings to the American Ambassador." All this as a key to the meaning of my conversation to-day with his two friends. All the talk was of the General and of the war and of his part in it and of his sayings and doings. And the centrepiece of the table talk was the probability that the war would end a drawn war—neither side surrendering. At the best for the Allies, the Germans would be driven back to their impregnable fortifications on the Rhine; and at the worst for the Allies, this fierce fighting would go on indefinitely in France or Belgium. Neither London nor Berlin is likely ever to be reached by the enemy. At any rate, next summer or autumn will find the armies in either of these two relations to one another. By that time somebody will know approximately the number of men that are killed —nobody yet knows and the world doesn't begin to suspect—these men think the Germans have already lost at least 400,000 in France and Belgium. Then a great revulsion will come. Not only will the neutral world rise up and say that this slaughter must cease, but the combatants themselves will say so and will at least be receptive to a suggestion. They will both be worn out, tho' neither will be conquered; and they will both realize that neither *can* conquer the other to a complete surrender. Then the President of the United States will be called upon to mediate—to lay down a broad principle or two by which the struggle may be ended.

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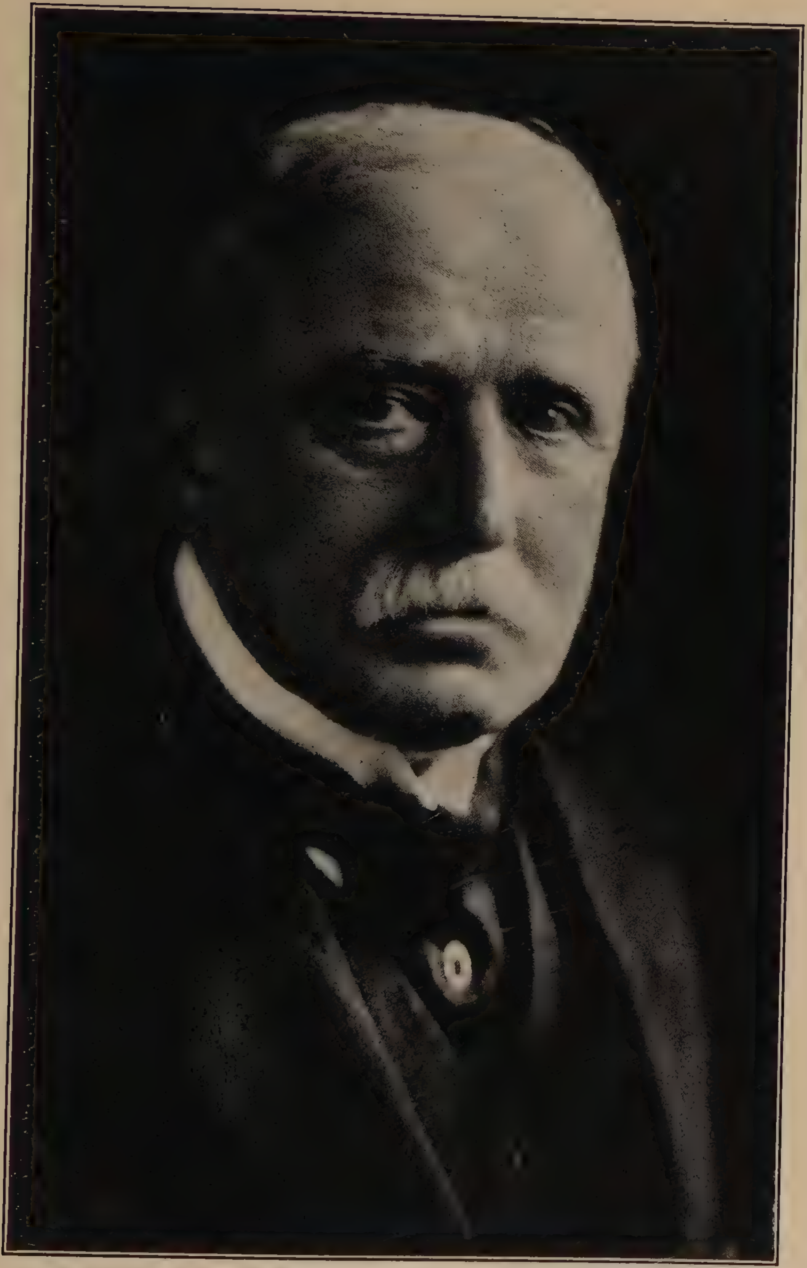
[1] Evidently Mr. George G. Moore, an American.

The point is, this is General French's opinion and General French's message to me—as plain as day, altho' these gentlemen did not say, in so many words, "The General asked us to say this to you": that he couldn't yet do. And the broad principles would be such as these: Every country must maintain its nationality—Belgium must be Belgian, of course; Alsace-Lorraine must be French, if they are French and so wish to be; Schleswig-Holstein Danish, if they are Danish and wish to be; Poland, the same principle; the South German States go with Austria, if they so wish, etc., etc.; the Slav states now Austrian become Russian. The German colonies are left as pawns to trade with in working out the details of the bargain. As for the discouragement of big armies and navies—that's more difficult. England will never give up the sea; else she can't be fed. Let great armies and navies be discouraged by treaties. (Here the thought was not very clear: it had not been thought out by the soldier.) As for Germany's paying a big indemnity to Belgium—that would be harder for the Allies to carry. Yet they probably will insist on it.

Then I asked if Russia might not conceivably take Berlin, with a large German Army necessary all the time in the west. Conceivably, yes; but it is not probable. The Russian lacks staying qualities; he quits, sometimes just before victory. But that is the only hope of reducing Germany to a position where she will make an uncon-



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Field Marshal Lord French (1852–1925), Earl of Ypres, Commander-in-Chief Expeditionary Force in Belgium and France, 1914–1915.

Major-General George O. Squier, Military Attaché, American Embassy, in London, 1912–1916 ditional surrender. The whole world will cry out for peace by next summer or next autumn and it'll have to be settled the best way possible.

What, I asked, hinders the world from crying out now —God knows enough men have been killed already? Yes, but the English and German peoples haven't reached the psychological point where either thinks that it can be beaten—each is yet sure of ultimate victory.

And the navies? Probably they will never fight in full force. The Germans will keep up their submarine and mine activity, but will not come out for a fair fight and be whipped—why should they, unless they be beaten to a frazzle on land and rush their navy out as a last act of desperation, to save it from capture? They'll sow the ocean with mines.

There was much more talk, but this is the gist of General French's message to me. He's a soldier, not a statesman; but he *is* a *soldier*, and this fact gives interest to his ideas.

Here, in any circles in London in which I have been, you never hear peace discussed. The English are just waking up to the war and the popular mood now is to fight to a dead finish.

Yours heartily and hastily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Such being the fearful prospect before Europe—that of a military stalemate, neither side justified in expecting a decision by arms, yet each destined to pour out its blood indefinitely until practically the whole of Europe perished from exhaustion—was there any opportunity in this situation for the United States? General French understood as well as Sir Edward Grey that America alone possessed the power to end the deadlock, and this was the reason that he sent this message to Page. Afterward, in similar circumstances, French came secretly to London, met Page at another luncheon at the house of Mr. Moore, and again explained to the American Ambassador the hopelessness of the situation.[1] What could America do? Such approaches as Mr. Bryan, presumably acting on the instructions of the President, had made in the direction of peace had not been especially to the point. His repeated efforts to stop the war had comprised nothing in the way of a precise programme or definite suggestion. They were all merely offers of "mediation" and "good offices." Mr. Bryan had made such offers in the last week in July, before the outbreak of war; he had repeated them in early August after the conflagration had started, and he renewed the effort on September 8th, after the battle of the Marne. In no instance did Mr. Bryan set forth any terms of settlement. His messages merely expressed the hope that the warring powers would stop fighting and get together. The United States stood ready at any time, the Secretary said, to assist in such an amicable proceeding. In the existing state of Europe, intimations of this sort naturally produced no result. Page formally presented Mr. Bryan's pleas to Sir Edward, who received them respectfully; neither Page nor Grey, however, regarded them with much seriousness. The conflict had reached the point where the exchange of polite notes seemed little less than a mockery. Only the "ponderables" of warfare and negotiation could affect that deadlock in France which Sir John French had recently described. "I have on my own account," Page telegraphed in response to Mr. Bryan's latest appeal, "had an informal conference with Sir Edward Grey about possible mediation. He reminded me that he exhausted every honourable means to keep peace, and that every government involved showed a disposition to meet some of his proposals except Germany. She had deliberately planned and prepared for a war. Still he was willing to come to any honourable arrangement for peace now or at any time. But everything will depend on the terms. The war has already revealed two great facts: first, that all Europe has been living on the brink of a precipice, and secondly, that Germany has done a grievous and irreparable wrong to Belgium. No peace can be concluded that will permit the continuance or recurrence of an armed brute power in Central Europe which violates treaties to make war and in making war assaults the continuity of civilization. Any terms that England will agree to must provide for an end of militarism forever and for reparation to ruined Belgium.

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[1] A memorandum published in Volume I, page 427, gives an account of this interview.

"The foregoing was Grey's wholly private talk to me not to be quoted to anybody or made public. It was personal and must be regarded as inviolably secret."

Page did not conceal his belief that all such pacific endeavours were merely wasted effort. Exchanges of telegrams and formal and informal communications between foreign secretaries and ambassadors, in his opinion, could have no effect upon the stalemate in France. Yet he believed that the United States could end the war,—end it upon terms that would usher in a period of peace, destroy the German menace, and promote the order of human society in which he believed. Moreover, he was convinced that the United States could do so without a large loss of American life. His midnight meditations by his study fire, to which he alludes in the above letter, frequently produced the most practical results. One of the subjects that engrossed his thoughts in the autumn of 1914 was this question posed two weeks afterward by Sir John French. And the answer assumed a form that is interesting, not only in itself, but in view of subsequent events.

To the President

October 6, 1914.

. . . I have my moods when I wonder if we oughtn't to step in and end it on a definite programme of the reduction of armaments and the restriction of military authority, and to make the acceptance of our programme a condition of our refraining from action. I am not yet sure; and I don't know what bad results this might bring us, who have at least the temporary happiness of being out of it. But this is a world-changing war. The world must be reconstructed out of it. We can't have it recur. Else life's not worth living and civilization is a delusion. Let me speculate: There's no important influence we can have on the terms of peace by any mere offers of mediation. The Allies will not consider peace till one side or the other be crushed. If they did, they would not be rid of the menace of German militarism long. They are going to keep that from growing up again if they can. England will surely. And, after all, it is primarily and mainly a war between England and Germany. It is England that Germany envies and hates and will destroy if she can. The contest is between England's power and position and Germany's ambition to rule the world by sheer military strength. If England win, as she will in the end, she will dictate the terms of peace—the end of militarism, and reparation to Belgium and France, and the English Navy will be stronger than ever and the British Empire more firmly knit together; and Russian military autocracy will remain till another day. There'll be no limitation of armament—except for Germany! And the United States will have no voice in the terms of settlement—and England will keep building her mammoth navy and Russia will keep her innumerable army.

But, if we were now to call high Heaven to witness this unspeakable result of armaments and war preparations and call on all neutral nations to join us in a demand that they shall cease—Italy, Spain, Holland, the Scandinavian states, the South American governments—and if we should say militarism must be rooted out of the system of every one of you, perhaps they'd all agree; but they would agree only as the price of our helping conquer Germany. Such a threat would end the war—? Or if we alone should do that—say to England: "Now, you wish to end militarism? Very well, we'll recall our neutrality, we'll sell you guns and ammunition; we'll sell nothing to Germany; if necessary, we'll let our citizens volunteer in your army; you may have our navy if you need it: now, what abridgement of armament will *you* make after this war, if we thus help you end it?" Perhaps we could drive a bargain in that way and really reduce the armaments of the world—and end the war almost at once. For, if we stopped all shipping to Germany and gave England arms, peace would quickly come. Could we or could we not thus make them all disarm? England could force Russia and Japan. And we could stop the war, which cannot be stopped in any other way till millions more men have been slain. We should not have to fight but only to give the English guns and to hold back food and everything else from Germany and perhaps to threaten to fight.

If we turned the proposition around and offered to aid Germany, apart from the trouble of getting our aid to Germany, we should only strengthen militarism in Germany and consequently everywhere else; and the same race in building armies and navies would go on as before.

Oh, well, I mustn't bore you too long with my speculations. This I *do* know: this slaughter and brutalization beggar description. A man's life isn't worth a dog's life. A treaty is a scrap of paper. Nobody can stop it by "good offices" or mediation—by talk or reasoning. It can be stopped or ended quickly only by us, and we can do it only by actions and threats. If that be impracticable, they must fight it out to the bitter end.

Yours very heartily,
WALTER H. PAGE.

The formula runs thus:

(1) If Germany were to win, the war lord, the war spirit, and armaments would remain, all around—fiercer and bigger than ever.

(2) If the Allies win, the armaments of Germany will be limited but not of Great Britain, nor Russia, nor Japan; and probably Germany would not be left a fair chance for legitimate expansion.

(3) If the neutral nations should join the Allies—not to fight, but to supply arms and to starve Germany out, millions of lives might be saved, and the Allies might now agree to a far more satisfactory policy concerning armies and navies and concentrated executive war power.

But I am not commending—only trying to think the thing out.

The present writer recalls discussing Page with Lord Northcliffe several years ago. "What do you regard as Page's most striking quality?" I asked the British journalist. The answer came like a flash in one word: "Wisdom." This letter, describing Page's proposal for American intervention in October, 1914, inevitably recalls

Lord Northcliffe's characterization. Viewed in connection with subsequent events it certainly seems supremely wise. In form, of course, it was only a suggestion, only a speculation, but the form in which it was cast should not deceive one as to the seriousness of Page's purpose. In reality the problem had been completely thought out, and this was the Ambassador's solution; this letter was the seed which Page hoped would germinate in the most receptive soil. "Nobody can stop the war by 'good offices' or mediation—by talk or reasoning. It can be stopped or ended quickly only by us, and we can do it only by actions or threats." It would be difficult to find the problem of 1914 described anywhere so briefly and so accurately as in these two sentences. The United States must first publish the terms on which the conflict should end—reparation to Belgium and disarmament. At that time Great Britain would have accepted these stipulations as a satisfactory basis for peace. Let us suppose, for a moment, that the United States had proposed them, coupled with the announcement—"threat" if you will—that unless Germany agreed then all our resources would be cast upon the side of the Allies. At this time it would have been hardly necessary to suggest that an American army be landed in France; the Russian hosts had hardly been tapped and needed only efficient arming, Great Britain still had her millions to draw upon, and the French army was at the summit of its strength. This country could have poured its money, its steel, its munitions into the Allied front, and the American and British navies could have instituted the same blockade of Germany that so effectually choked the enemy to death three years afterward. How long could Germany have survived without American food, American copper, American cotton, and the other indispensable supplies which, despite the British Navy, she was drawing in such vast quantities from the United States? Page's proposal now appears consummate statesmanship. However, it failed to produce the desired result. That it made some impression on the President is not impossible for, on February 22, 1916, a year and a half afterward, as will appear, he made a proposal to the British Government almost identically the same. At that time the situation had so changed that the plan seemed unwise and Page himself regarded it as inadequate.

III

Instead of taking this plan to heart, the United States began the long and tedious and unprofitable quarrel with Great Britain over contraband and the blockade. The merits of this dispute have been set forth in preceding volumes.[1] The letters to the President cover much of this familiar ground, but they do so with a new vividness.

To the President

October 15, 1914.

. . . Now when you are in this mood and Sir Edward Grey is in this mood and all men here who think are in this mood—listening lest the very pillars of civilization give way and the last crash come—in comes a telegram from Mr. Lansing[2] about a cargo of copper or of wheat, saying that the Declaration of London is the furthest limit our government can go in permitting this or that, or that International Law says thus and so—all which used to be true and seems true yet in Washington, as you look out over the autumn-tinted leaves to the Washington monument and think of Houston's late flowers at the Department of Agriculture—peaceful, happy land—shall we here ever see it again? But read here, we have to say to one another (Anderson and Laughlin and I)—"But England never ratified the Declaration of London, and since it was made petroleum, copper, etc., have for the first time become as necessary to military manufacture as lead itself; and international law—what does that say in the company of 18-inch guns?" But Anderson and I make up our case, adjust our arguments, and full of courage go to a conference with Sir Edward Grey and one or two members of his Cabinet and of his staff. We are met with the utmost conciliation—they will go the full length to meet our views and wishes; they will tear up preceding proclamations and instead of them issue a new one—they do not wish to disturb normal American commerce (and it is impossible to doubt their sincerity), but—*but* the enemy shall not receive military material through Holland. The English Government will take and pay for it—they'll do anything but permit it to reach the Germans. Foodstuffs they will no longer stop; but war stuffs must not go through. Now that is the beginning and the end of it. They'll meet our wishes up to that point. Beyond that point they will not go, as much as to say, "American friendship and favour we prize more highly than anything else, except our chance to win in this unprecedented struggle, but this unprecedented struggle has made new conditions."

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[1] Volume I, Chapter XII; Volume II, Chapter XV.

[2] At this time Counsellor of the State Department.

The Spanish Ambassador comes to see me. They have stopped his ore (iron).

"What are you doing about it?" I ask.

"Protesting," says he.

"Well?"

"Well," he says, "that's all I can do, for if my government were in their shoes, they'd walk the same path—protest and file claims."

The Norwegian Minister comes in—the same story, the same conclusion. The Swedish Minister—in a bluster.

"What agreement have you reached?" I ask.

"Agreement? None at all! It's an outrage! But it's a new condition. I have no case. I can't blame them."

The Danish Minister next, humble and polite, begs, if he be "asking a proper question," etc. *idem*, *idem*, *idem*. Then the Dutch Minister calls, somewhat angry, but he too confesses that they are most courteous but that there was never before any such condition.

"We have all forgotten what a world war means—eh?"

Thereafter I meet the Italian Ambassador in the corridor of the Foreign Office. In the course of a rambling conversation I manage to ask him incidentally if his country has any trade with Holland.

"Not now; who can think of trade in times like these? There's too much at stake."

Thus, without giving any *quid* I've got the *quo* of nearly all the neutral governments. Of course, these are small governments and their protests can be disregarded. We are big and strong and in another class. The British Government so treats us, too. But our arguments are the same as the arguments of the little governments, our case the same. Anderson and I sit down together for the *n*th time and go over it all, point by point, document by document, complaint by complaint, international law by international law (as if that were a fixed thing, as, of course, it isn't), declaration by declaration, Lansing's dispatch by Lansing's dispatch; and we go to a conference and present our case and make our argument; and every time we get whatever we want and all we want up to this point:

"Of course the enemy must not get war materials."

"Yes, but *your* government can get them."

"Only because our government has the sea and the enemy cannot prevent us."

The upshot of it is, to put it more bluntly than anybody has put it, we've got to submit to this—or fight, if we so choose. And what the Spanish Ambassador says about his government is true of ours: we'd do the same thing *mutatis mutandis*.[1] There is no lack of sincerity, or of courtesy, or of a genuine wish to meet our wishes and to keep our favour; they accept the Dutch Government's assurance about prohibiting the export of foodstuffs, which the Dutch Government probably can't hinder; they know that vast quantities of American cargoes go to the Germans; they do not draw fine points or make quibbles; but they simply will not let copper through to Krupp or petroleum to the German Army. Not a man of us here—American, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, or Scandinavian—sees a tenable case against that position. But here come Lansing's telegrams, which read as if they came out of a sort of Hague-book in a time of peace. I believe and hope that the new Order in Council will settle the controversy. But, whether it do or not, I want you to make sure that I have diligently and emphatically presented every case and every argument and every instruction that I have received. I mean this for a mere general report of the atmosphere of these proceedings and of the general result and of the feeling that I have down in my immortal soul.

Even before you receive this, the controversy may be ended by the Dutch going over to the Germans and by the English blockading Holland, or by further mine-laying in the North Sea. And if German cruisers should get into the Atlantic no war material would reach England from the United States or any other country.

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[1] It may be worth while pointing out that as soon as the United States entered the war, it discarded all the "principles" our State Department was urging at this time, and instituted a more severe, and even "illegal" blockade than Great Britain had been enforcing for two years.

And thus the heavy days pass, my friend, men dying as we thought they would never be killed again—as they never were killed before—in such a deadly clash as no man away from it can picture to himself, changing the map, changing the world; changing war, changing customs, abolishing precedents. Our land is the only land worth living in, and the immediate present is not a happy time for any controversies that can with honour be avoided or postponed. There will be time for them when this deadly business is ended—some years hence, I fear.

Yours faithfully,
Walter H. Page.

It therefore appears that the official Washington mind during this critical period was not interested in anything so practical as a plan of American intervention, but in something so difficult and abstract and even unreal as the Declaration of London. Into this morass of legalism it is not the present purpose to enter again. Briefly, the Declaration was a set of rules for regulating commerce in war-time tentatively adopted by an international conference in 1908. The United States was the only nation that ratified this document. Great Britain had repudiated it. Yet Mr. Lansing, as soon as the European war began, attempted to force Great Britain to adopt the Declaration as her rule in the naval warfare against Germany. Great Britain refused, despite four urgent requests, because to do so meant that such articles as copper, cotton, rubber, and foodstuffs—even when intended for the armed forces of the enemy—would have free passage to Germany. In other words, its adoption meant that the Allies would lose the war.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
October 21, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have been and am puzzled by Mr. Lansing's dispatch (No. 323, October 16) and your confidence in the plan that he proposed. I enclose a copy of the essential parts of the dispatch. It contains two propositions: (1) that Great Britain accept the Declaration without any change or addition whatever, and (2) that the British Government then issue a proclamation, setting forth that since the Declaration is conflicting and does not provide for emergencies, Great Britain interprets it to mean what she requires it to mean—the United States not being privy to this, *although it is the United States that suggests it.* Now the Declaration itself distinctly forbids the addition of copper and iron ore and rubber and hides to the contraband list. England could not add these to its list and accept the foregoing plan—in good faith and with truth; and these have become, since the Declaration was drawn up, among the most important articles of warfare. I have surely misunderstood or Mr. Lansing failed to see where his proposal would lead. I am aware of course of his over-work (as we are all over-worked), and I am not writing in a critical spirit but in a spirit of mere inquiry to get my own bearings, and of helpful suggestion (if it be helpful) to work out a satisfactory result. Of course I know that Mr. Lansing did not mean that I should make a dishonourable proposal. But I cannot see how he could think that Sir Edward Grey could accept this proposal, which, as we see it here, surely is not frank.

When I telegraphed you that the discussion is "academic," I did not mean that the subject itself is academic, but that our excessively argumentative treatment of it seemed academic to me—for example, our continued insistence on the Declaration of London after England's positive declination three times to accept it *in toto*. England never accepted it in peace. Parliament declined to accept it—in effect rejected it. This Government then could hardly be expected to accept it in a time of war, in the face of its own Parliamentary objection. Yet we continue to make its acceptance the first condition of our now reaching an agreement. That is what I meant to call "academic." It surely isn't practical or effective.

Still I tried for the fourth time to persuade Sir Edward to accept it *in toto*—such were my instructions—and then to issue another proclamation as explained in Mr. Lansing's dispatch.

"Do you mean that we should accept it," he asked, "and then issue a proclamation to get around it?"—with some approach to irritation. And the interview ended with a feeling on my part that I had lost ground and really been put on the defensive by my insistence on his acceptance of the Declaration for the fourth time—coupled now with a proposal that could not be made to appear wholly frank and friendly.

I will not say that such instructions are not agreeable—that's not important or to the point—but I will say that they are not effective in the dealings of two great, friendly, frank and truthful nations.

It is one thing and an easy thing to present a question informally (which doesn't bind anybody); but it's a different thing to say that the idea is wholly my own and not my government's when it isn't. I did not tell him whose idea it is, but only that I was discussing the subject informally. I must be spared from saying that anything is my "*personal suggestion and not one for which my government is responsible*" when this is not true.

Of course, the matter of this controversy is very real and serious, a tender spot as you call it. But it has arisen in all naval wars—long before the Declaration was prepared. England makes her contraband list; she will prevent contraband from reaching the enemy if she can; if she seize cargoes she must prove that they are contraband or suffer heavy damages and heavier criticism and ill will; and if she detain neutral ships or cargoes not contraband she suffers the same penalty in even heavier degree. She's got to give assurance to neutrals what she will do and what they may expect. *She's* got to take the responsibility for every act—under the usage of international law. By becoming *a party to her proclamations beforehand we run a certain risk of agreeing beforehand to her procedure*, thus embarrassing ourselves when definite cases come up. We must take no responsibility, but reserve all our rights under international law and usage and so inform our merchants and shippers. Then the responsibility is shifted from us to England—responsibility for her general plan or code of procedure. We are then free to make the most of every case of indignity or deflection or confiscation.

This, England is perfectly willing to agree to; and, in her naval conduct, she is going to give *us* as little offence as possible, if we act frankly, in good faith, and trust to her good faith and cease to irritate her and to cause delay by long argumentative general objections to her plan of procedure.

At any rate, looked at as a practical matter and not as a case in court, this is all that we can do—or we can fight.

Of course that's absurd—I mean talk of war is absurd and criminal. If we come to an open quarrel, we've still got to take this course, for our new peace treaty forbids us to fight until a commission shall report on the quarrel. We can claim damages for any harm we may suffer without a quarrel; or we may quarrel and then claim the same identical damages. The differences will be only this—that in one case the two greatest nations in the world and the two friendliest peoples and the two great governments that are the only hope of human freedom and human progress will be at ill will (the last good will now existing anywhere in this insane world gone); or these two great nations can remain the only friendly great powers on earth. I think the stake is too big to risk for the satisfaction of arguing to the finish about propositions of general procedure *before the event*, or about the acceptance of a Declaration that was rejected in time of peace.

All other neutral governments (so I understand) have accepted this plan.

The Admiralty are making almost open complaint that Sir Edward Grey in his consideration for the rights of neutrals is "badly in the way" of their preventing war materials from reaching the enemy. I think we can trust something to such a man. Or—what is the alternative? I once heard you say that it took you twenty years to recover from your legal training—from the habit of mind that is bent on making out a case rather than on seeing the large facts of a situation in their proper proportion. Remember that all this discussion has so far been on a general code or plan of action, to which, if our suggestions are accepted, we in effect make ourselves a party, whereas more important than any code or plan is the spirit in which it is carried out.

Sir Edward Grey and I have been over the whole ground, backward and forward, helped by Mr. Anderson and his (Grey's) legal advisers, time and again. I have told him that we want only

(1) A clear preservation of our neutrality;

(2) No tampering with our commerce with neutral nations;

(3) No tampering with our commerce with *any* nation except in contraband;

(4) A strict respect for all our rights under international law and usage.

He wants only to prevent war materials from reaching Germany—nothing more. He does not wish to hinder our commerce or to irritate us. He will do everything he can to prevent it. The peculiar complication is, of course, the reaching of Germany with war materials through Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Italy. He will do his best to avoid trouble. He will make those governments help him as far as they can, by friendly persuasion, not by declaring them "enemy territory" as regards trade. And if we suffer injury he is willing to make reparation, case by case.

If we can trust him (as we must, since there's nobody else to trust in the matter) and cease long arguments about general plans and codes and put the whole responsibility on him and take up case by case—there will still be some chance for a little faith and good will in the world.

Yours faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

P. S. I have been in some doubt about sending this letter lest it may seem to you a criticism of Mr. Lansing. I do not so mean it in the least—only a criticism of his method of approach to the subject. Great Britain is our friend. As a friend we can do with her all we wish. The state of mind we show in this controversy regards her as an opponent in court, whom we are fighting and propose to fight. Again, this tone and temper seem to me to have regard only to this controversy and to the present moment. Wise diplomacy regards the next decade—the next twenty-five years. What will our relations be then? And how will our conduct of this controversy affect them? That's what I mean, and I do not mean the slightest personal criticism of Mr. Lansing or of anybody else. I am the last man who can for one moment afford to sit in judgment on any other man for what I regard as mistakes. I need too much charity myself.

W. H. P.

The above letter contains an enclosure, "the essential parts of Mr. Lansing's confidential dispatch, No. 323, of October 16," and against each paragraph Page, for the personal edification of the President, has written his comment:

"The desire of this government is to obtain from the British Government the issuance of an Order in Council adopting the Declaration of London without any amendment whatsoever."

"You might in the strictest confidence intimate to Sir E. Grey the Department's plan as follows stating very explicitly *that it is your personal suggestion and not one for which your Government is responsible.*"

On these paragraphs, especially the underscored part, Page has written:

"*This is not true.*"

"Let the British Government issue an Order in Council accepting the Declaration of London without change or addition. . . .

"Let this Proclamation be followed by another Order in Council, *of which the United States need not be previously advised,*" on which Page comments:

"Hardly frank."

"declaring that when the British Government is convinced that a port or a territory of a neutral country is being used as a base for the transit of supplies for an enemy government, a Proclamation shall issue declaring that *such port or territory has acquired enemy character in so far as trade in contraband is concerned and that vessels trading therewith shall be subject to the rules of the Declaration governing trade to enemy's territory.*"

On this Page comments:

"*In the delicate and dangerous temper of the present, this would have a strong tendency to drive Italy, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden to war against England.*"

"I repeat that any suggestion which you may make to Sir Edward Grey must be done in an entirely personal way and with the distinct understanding that this government is in no way responsible for what you may say."

The Ambassador's comment:

"*I can hardly believe that such a subterfuge or misrepresentation of the real facts is necessary between what I hope I may call large-minded and perfectly frank and truthful representatives of two great and friendly nations. My relations with Sir Edward have not been built up on this basis and could not survive this method of dealing—long.*"

It is perhaps not surprising that Page, determined to end an intolerable discussion, informed the President, through Colonel House, that if he were requested again to move for the adoption of the Declaration of London, he would resign as Ambassador. On this the State Department withdrew its demand and the incident was closed. The whole episode was a humiliating defeat for Mr. Lansing and the State Department and for the prestige of the United States, but there was nothing to do but back down. America abandoned its attempt to enforce on Great Britain a code of maritime warfare which every nation, except the United States, had rejected, and agreed, in future, to rest its protests upon the existing rules of international warfare.

Possibly diplomats of the old-fashioned school may smile at Page's reluctance to tell falsehoods to the British Foreign Office, or to serve as a medium of misrepresentation. The much quoted definition of an ambassador —the famous epigram of Sir Henry Wotton, a distinguished practitioner of the art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,—as "an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country," readily comes to mind. Whether the standards of diplomatic intercourse in the second decade of the twentieth century corresponded with those of Wotton's time is a matter that better informed historians can decide; the fact is that deception had never figured in the diplomacy of Page and Grey. Such adroit manœuvres as playing for position; concealing important facts; scoring neat though temporary advantages; making false pretentions and claims; telling white or black lies, were gifts which neither man possessed. Grey himself, in reminiscent conversation with the present writer, once explained his method of dealing with Page. "We simply placed all the cards on the table";—such was his description of the way he and the American Ambassador handled weighty problems. They told each other the truth, revealed all the facts they possessed, and discussed all possible solutions. They were not two wily mediævalists; they were merely two twentieth-century gentlemen attempting to find the way of honour and justice by the use of that straightforwardness and honesty and common sense with which nature had endowed them.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
October 28, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

In forty-eight hours after we withdrew the demand for the British acceptance of the Declaration of London without change, every detained American ship and cargo was released but one, and I have no doubt that that one will be released in another forty-eight hours. I do not mean to imply in the least that these ships and cargoes were held, so to speak, as hostages: I do not believe that that idea entered anybody's mind. But so long as we held up their general policy, it was impossible—or surely the more difficult—to get at these concrete cases. They couldn't issue their revised list of contraband which shippers all over the neutral world were waiting for, and the ships of other neutral nations were detained as ours were. Now, I think, we are going to have the minimum of trouble.

As soon as the insistence on the Declaration was withdrawn, I was in a position to talk to Sir Edward Grey with the old-time frankness about the whole subject, which had become impossible so long as I had to lecture him on the necessity of accepting a general code that his Parliament and every other European government had rejected in peace, when they considered it on its merits. I told him again of the universal, especially the American, sensitiveness about any interference with commerce; I hoped that he would impress on his Admiralty the need of the greatest caution; I told him that the stopping of ships just outside New York produced a worse effect than stopping the same ships on this side;[1] I suggested and urged that in every case he should at once have a full report made to us, as soon as a ship was stopped, why it was stopped—a full report of all facts and suspicions—and not to wait till the ship's captain reported to the American owners of the ship or of her cargo, and the owners reported to our government and our government made demands of his government—all that loses time and causes additional irritation; and that he might be sure that our government will take up every single case of detention with vigour. I suggested that each government might, in my opinion, permit the utmost and the promptest publicity of the facts in every case. If, for instance, the fact had been published that the ship which was detained (with a cotton cargo) at Stornaway, Scotland, was detained by the Scotch owners and not by the British Admiralty—there could have been no irritation about that. I can now push every case vigorously; and I am sure he will do his best to induce his naval officers to be careful. *There's* the difficulty: naval men don't have to settle the trouble that they cause. I am hopeful that we may now get through without serious trouble. Sir Edward and I had a little tilt at compliments to-day. I have to see him every day now.

"I don't like to make myself a nuisance," I said; "but your navy must think we are fond of controversies about ships; and we must, of course, take every case up promptly."

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[1] He has since told me the British cruisers stay over there for fear the interned German boats might put to sea. (W. H. P.'s note.)

"You must really believe me," said he, "when I say that I am glad to see you; for I will say, though you push hard, you play fair."

"You can stop the pushing, Sir Edward," I said, "when your naval men learn to resist the impulse to stop every ship that comes along. Don't you suppose they enjoy it?"

"*I* don't enjoy it."

Then, after a sad sort of smile—

"More oil ships? If only that be not going to the Germans, it's all right: I'll do what you like and beg your pardon. But it mustn't get through, you know."

CHAPTER VII

COLONEL SQUIER VISITS THE WESTERN FRONT

I

To the President

6 Grosvenor Square, W.
November 4, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Then, to put small things next big ones—my daughter got a scolding when she came back and told me that she left Washington before your kind invitation to call reached her. She told me she wrote her explanation and excuses. She was rushing to get back before all the ship routes became mine-strewn; and this is now fast coming to pass.

Most important of all—House informs me that you are in good physical trim. That's cheerful as well as most important. I am frequently asked about your health—not because the questioner supposes you are ill, but because he means that the world can't afford now to have any uncertainty on that score.

The darkest days, I fear, are not yet come here. When more British ships are blown up and more and more of the sea is German mined and when more and more neutral ships are sunk (pray Heaven, not an American one!) and when it is discovered how many Englishmen are among the innumerable dead in France, a shudder of horror will seize all England. It is most solemn now: the men who think look back over their history and see no time so murderous and perhaps none so dangerous and uncertain. All that holds the world together is the friendship and kinship of our country and this. I never forget for one moment—this fact that just now is the most important fact in the world; and I do thank God it is *you* that are where you are, so that this will not be forgotten on our side in any small controversy that my come. That Lincoln-like man, Sir Edward Grey, never forgets it. He is, so far, the strong, pathetic figure of the time.

"Steady, steady," I say to myself every day, "and look a long way ahead. It's the big, lasting, profound things that count now, not the little tasks of the passing day or of the changing humour"; and I try to keep the rudder true.

Always heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
November 30, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Of course nobody has any clear idea about the duration of the war, and the general military expectation that it would last certainly one year, probably two years, and possibly three, has not been changed. But the feeling often comes over me that no people can stand such a strain for so long a time. The tension and the depression and the anxiety will become simply unbearable. I surely am as far out of it as any man in England. My work is work of singular detachment. We walk the tight rope of neutrality. The women have even ceased to insist on Mrs. Page's serving on this and that committee that has to do with only one side of the conflict. The thrifty American merchants of contraband wares have ceased to come to me to help them get to the War Office to make big contracts. We are as aloof from it as it is possible to be.

Yet we are not aloof at all. It isn't work that tires. It's the war. Everybody feels it. I meet nobody who feels differently. Well, if this is so in London, how must it be on the Continent? I think the world was never before put to such a strain. May it not break some day all on a sudden? The French would probably have collapsed as they did in 1870 but for the Belgian check of the Germans and the English help. There is an unexpressed feeling that the Russians may suddenly quit some day as they did in the Crimean War. They believe here that the Austrians have almost come to the point of despair already—I do not know. The Germans and the English don't have panics. But the people of any nation must reach a point sometime when they feel as I often feel: What's the use? You can do nothing useful, nothing constructive, you can get no cheerful experiences in life, you live in a mood of mourning and of anxiety—is life worth while? In every time of trouble before now (I haven't had many) I have been able to forget myself in some good book. I thought I should always have this resource. But it's gone now. The war gets between my eyes and the printed page. It gets between your golf club and the ball. Somebody said something here the other night about Christmas. It startled me. I found myself thinking it all out as a new proposition—Christmas—December—presents—the children at home—Santa Claus—the year 1914—when did I hear of these things before? What does one do at Christmas?—I feel as if I'd never care to come to Europe again. It will always link itself in my mind with this supreme crime. Most of its best young men will be dead, the older ones forever under the shadow of this experience, the Continent bankrupt and ruined, suggesting only human misery—haggard old women, beggars, and starved children, and maimed men, and endless talk all their lives of this war. The sunshine on the sand in North Carolina, a countryman spitting at a pebble on his way to church and calling his mangy dog—that seems a healthful scene to me compared with anything here.

And all the world has taken to lying. You can't believe anything that you hear or read. Three times within a week somebody in the United States lied to the State Department. Here come telegrams: An American citizen imprisoned for criticizing the English: get him out. We call the man up on the telephone (in his office) and ask him if he's in prison or if he has criticized the English. "News to me," he says, and he goes on with his work. A day or two later—an American citizen found guilty of spying, to be shot to-morrow: hustle! All the military camps in the kingdom, all the military courts, all the police are set to work frantically to find the man who's to be shot to-morrow. Telegraph and telephone are worked hot. To-morrow comes. Nobody's heard of such a man. We are talking about what we are to do, when the man walks in and says he guesses he'd better get a passport. He is asked about being a spy and condemned to be shot; and he laughs and remarks: "I guess my folks at home were getting uneasy about me." Then comes a telegram about the detention of a ship with a *full* cargo of cotton. Demand its release! Well, it has so many tons of copper in the bottom. On this side of the world it's the same way. The Germans have taken Calais—everybody believes it for a day. To-morrow night the Zeppelins will come—many people believe it. The Germans have seized American food in Belgium. I get a messenger through to Whitlock. On the contrary, he writes back, they are giving us every aid in distributing it. The German Government asks for a report on the scandalous condition of the detention camp at Newcastle. There has never been a detention camp at Newcastle. Periodically I remind the British Government that we can't send private inquiries in our government pouch to Berlin: will they please inform the public that inquiries must be made at the War Office? Certainly. The very next day a man on the staff of the War Office comes in and says that since our embassy is the only channel of communication will we please make inquiry about his brother? So, in addition to being infinitely sad, the whole world is going lying mad and credulously stupid. Now people can't recover from this abnormal state overnight. These little incidents hint big of the demoralization of the mind and of the character of men.

The Germans are indescribably angry with the British. They question and criticize everything. At bottom they hate and distrust us also. The English are slow beyond any decent patience. The Austrians mechanically follow the Germans in their restrictions. The Turks ask twice a day about their consuls. Untruthful merchants in the United States misinform our own government. The British Admiralty and War Office cause interminable delay. I never know what a day will bring. Depression hangs over everybody like a London fog. But all these are incidental—are as nothing, if we keep fair and considerate dealing,—these two governments with one another; for upon this hangs the destiny of the world. The Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey never forget this and I use their appreciation of our friendship as far as it is manly to use it. And their attitude will enable us to pull through. As I say, all else is of minor consequence. Ours, of course, is the future of the world. When the world recovers its senses, its first remark will be, "Thank God for the United States." And so say I now.

Heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

P. S.

Just after I had finished this letter, Lord Haldane dropped in and talked an hour or more. In addition to being "the Keeper of the King's conscience" he is yet Secretary of War, being a sort of civilian aid to Lord Kitchener. He knows German literature and the Germans as well as any man in England. A few days ago he sent me a letter that Prince von Bülow had written to me, asking my good offices on behalf of his interned brother.

"Your old friend, the old German Chancellor, knows better than to expect me to be able to do what he asks—doesn't he?"

"Well, that doesn't keep any German from trying."

Lord Haldane doesn't know how to guess about the duration of the war any better than I. Yet he knows all that the British Government knows. But he has more confidence in the Russians than most men I meet have. He told me of a Russian whom he met here a little while ago. Somebody asked him if he wouldn't soon be called to the front.

"Not immediately," he said, "I belong to the thirteenth million and only five millions have yet been called out."

Lord Haldane thinks they'll stick, for they regard it as a holy war. He's chiefly afraid that a peace may be patched up before another war is made impossible. That's what, I find, most Englishmen fear—that Germany will be left with a chance to do all this over again some years hence. If that be so, life will not be worth living on this side of the world. They all confess now that it hasn't been worth living these ten years.

To the President

6 Grosvenor Square, W., London,
15 December, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

This is my wish for a happy Christmas for you—that we may get through this war with the great influence of our country not only unimpaired but strengthened.

In the small share that I have in working for that great aim, I try at every step to consider the large historic forces at play before I consider any irritating incident of the day. The incident, at its worst, will be forgotten to-morrow: the great historic forces will exist after we are dead. The great question is, How will our country stand when the Old World is reorganized after this war is ended? The present German Government or any government like it will hate us then as now, because we stand for the very opposite of its military spirit and ambition. Other nations will respect us as we conduct ourselves during its progress. It is the larger good and the future relations that we shall have that I try to keep in view.

When I get a hint from home that I am pro-British, and am chided here by both English and Americans because (they say) I lack proper friendliness and am too pro-German, I recall a far-off memory of my life out West. There was a cowboy ball in town. As the hours tripped along, a jolly drunk came over the merry gentlemen of the party and they showed their real enjoyment of the evening by accusing one another of all the crimes of which each man had ever been suspected. As this hilarious fun was running strong—all jolly drunk and noisy—the able-bodied parson of the town stepped in. Two friendly fellows seized him, one by each arm, and one said:

"Say, parson, what's you accused of—too much hell fire?"

"No," said the other fellow, "too much harp and holy ghost."

I don't remember what the parson said; but I do know that neither his cosmogony nor his daily walk and conversation suffered radical change from this inquisition; for he had a way of looking ahead and of seeing things in proper proportion. I suspect he regarded each accusation as offsetting the other.

To drop to a serious depth (that's a sudden way we have in this time of unnatural strain)—I have heard from high sources that any talk of peace which is suspected of being inspired in Berlin would be received as an unfriendly suggestion. There is not the slightest feeling of vengeance here—only a feeling of sorrow; but the English are determined not to have this war recur. The German armed threat must disappear, and the sooner it disappears and with the least harm to the Germans, the better. There is not the slightest hatred of Germans. The moment Germany will or can give up what we call militarism forever, peace will come instantly—with no revenge, no hatred, but, of course, with the reinstatement of Belgium. But no voice will be heard except on these conditions—no talk of merely stopping the war to let it recur ten or twenty or forty years hence, to gratify a vast military machine, which must fight somebody at some time to justify its existence.

The English are become very suspicious of the German influence and activity in the United States.

But I set out only to wish you a happy Christmas, while I congratulate our country on your wise leadership and your ever-strengthening grasp on the confidence and affection of our people and of the world. And I send this to be posted under the serene countenance of George Washington (and not King George) by Mrs. Page, who hears (and answers) the call of our grandchildren at Christmas. I hope that she may have the pleasure to see you before her return.

Always heartily yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

II

Sir Edward Grey was not the only leader in the struggle who worked, from the first, for American coöperation with the Allies. While he was founding his diplomatic policy on the necessity of obtaining American support, the military chieftains had their eyes on the United States as a desirable military associate. From the day the German armies invaded Belgium, a man of very different type from Grey looked upon the United States as an important element in the war. And Lord Kitchener's idea of American coöperation was much more direct than Grey's. At the outbreak of war the Foreign Secretary was thinking of the United States chiefly from the economic point of view. The time came when Grey's programme went much further: at the beginning, however, his purpose was to maintain Anglo-American relations on so even a keel that our foodstuffs, our war munitions, our steel, our copper, and other materials would flow uninterruptedly into British ports, while the British Navy, in full command of the seas, was keeping these same materials out of Germany. From the first, however, Lord Kitchener, with the more brutal directness of the practical soldier, was determined to make the United States a military ally. He desired nothing less than an

American army, if necessary millions strong, fighting by the side of the British and the French. Whatever criticisms may justly fall on Kitchener's head, one truth at least is clear: he completely understood the magnitude of his problem. His famous prediction that the war would last at least three years was more than a happy prophecy: it was a deliberate calculation. Another opinion, which Kitchener did not publish, was that without the military support of the United States the Allies could not win. He shared the judgment of General French, expressed to Page on two occasions and reported by the Ambassador to the President, that the military situation, after the battle of the Marne, was an inevitable deadlock. General French's solution was peace. Kitchener's plan was an American army in Europe. British statecraft in these autumn months of 1914 thus presents a double drama; one in which the leading performer was Sir Edward Grey, sitting in the massive Foreign Office in Downing Street, skilfully handling American problems in a way that would make American industrial resources accessible to the Entente, while another figure, more rigid, more direct, perhaps even more determined, was quietly at work only a few hundred feet distant,—his ambition being to make the United States an active force in the war.

Sir Edward Grey conducted his negotiations through Page. Lord Kitchener, however, knew little of Ambassadors; he really understood only one type of man, and that was the soldier. Fortunately the American Army had a particularly worthy representative in London at that time. Colonel George O. Squier was as much of an innovation as military attaché as was Page as Ambassador. Until his appointment, the American military attaché in London had not taken his duties any too seriously. When General Leonard Wood became Chief of Staff, however, he decided to make this post more important. The science of war had made great progress; the business of a military attaché, thought General Wood, should be to survey the great armed camp which Europe had become, and derive from it such lessons as would promote the military preparations of the United States. For this reason, Colonel Squier, much to his astonishment, was transferred to the London Embassy in 1912. Colonel Squier was a man of great scientific attainments. In addition to his military education, received at West Point, he held the doctorate of Johns Hopkins University, where he had been a pupil in physics of Rowland. Colonel Squier had spent the larger part of his military career in scientific investigation. His inventions in cable transmission and his wireless had already enrolled him as one of the greatest workers in this field. Under new conditions of warfare, therefore, Colonel Squier seemed to be the man for this London post. When Page reached London he found Colonel Squier well established as military attaché. Page was not at first familiar with his reputation; the military attaché was a modest and undemonstrative man; Page became interested, however, when he discovered that many of the leading scientists in London were making frequent visits to the little office above his own where Colonel Squier had his headquarters. The two years preceding the war gave the military attaché the opportunity not only of meeting scholars but of forming the closest associations with the leaders of the British Army. When hostilities broke out there were probably few military attachés in London, if indeed there were any, who had so completely won the intimacy of the men who were to direct the war. British officialdom gives its confidence carefully, after only the severest testing; the indispensable requirement is that a man shall be able to hold his tongue; Colonel Squier had already proved, to the satisfaction of Lord Kitchener and his associates, that his ability to keep secrets amounted to little less than genius; from the beginning of the war, therefore, he was taken practically into their confidence and given opportunities and privileges for which all the other attachés were vainly clamouring.

The proposal of General von Donop, that the American Government transfer hundreds of thousands of Springfield rifles from its own arsenals to the British Army, has already been described. Not only Von Donop, but Lord Kitchener himself made this request to Colonel Squier. It was indeed one of Kitchener's favourite plans; the diplomatic details involved apparently did not interest him.

"You've got those rifles: we need them and we must have them"—this was the way the matter phrased itself in Kitchener's mind. Colonel Squier was amazed at the War Minister's knowledge of American armament. He knew just how many rifles the American Army had and precisely how many were in each arsenal. At that time British recruits were drilling with wooden muskets and the task of early munitioning the army was a formidable one.

Kitchener's life was burdened by the demands of foreign military observers who wished to visit the Allied front in France. Their eagerness and insistence indeed passed all reasonable bounds. The extension of such privileges had been usual in all wars, and never since the world began had military experts had such an opportunity of witnessing their art. However, the head of the British Army was inflexible in his hostility to such excursions. The grim and implacable "organizer of victory" sat unimpressed in his large room on the second floor of the War Office, silent in face of these appeals.

One day Colonel Squier was summoned to this headquarters. He was requested to come in full-dress uniform and to keep his visit a secret from everybody except his Ambassador. Colonel Squier found Lord Kitchener sitting alone, as usual, in his large office, and in an extremely genial mood. Colonel Squier's recollection of Kitchener indeed is not the common one. The war lord whom he recalls is not the grim, unsmiling, monosyllabic and unbending autocrat who has passed into history. Instead, his picture is that of an extremely genial and gracious man, with the most confidential manner and the most friendly smile, deprecating rather than insistent in his conversation—in fact, a rather slow and hesitant talker, but open, frank, and ingratiating. He was certainly in this mood on this morning. He was secretive about only one thing—his wish that not a soul in London, especially not the military attachés of other nations, should know anything about this interview.

"I suppose I shall get caught at it," he explained, "but I have decided to let you go to the front in France and stay there as long as you wish." Kitchener was apparently willing to take the risk of offending other nations, so important did he think it that the United States should possess the most up-to-date information about war, in case this country should become a party to the conflict.

This was the opportunity for which Colonel Squier and all the other military men in the world had been clamouring since the outbreak of war. The difficulty, as Lord Kitchener now explained, was that of preventing the attachés of other nations from learning about such a visit. Of course, Colonel Squier's absence from London would be noted immediately, and the suspicions of his brother attachés at once aroused. However, he had hit upon a plan. That was to have Colonel Squier detached from the American Embassy in London and become, at least temporarily, military attaché to the American Embassy in Paris. His absence from London would thus be satisfactorily explained. Lord Kitchener asked Colonel Squier to make clear the situation to Page and obtain his consent.

From the War Office the American officer went at once to the Embassy.

"I'll do it!" said Page, thumping his desk, and in a brief period the matter was arranged, Ambassador Herrick in France cordially coöperating.

On November 22, 1914, Colonel Squier arrived at St. Omer, General French's headquarters in France, and presented a brief note from Lord Kitchener. He soon learned that his trip was not the usual more or less dress-parade affair that the visits of military men subsequently became. Colonel Squier was taken into the British family and the British camp; he spent five weeks in everyday association; he lived at times with the men in the trenches; he messed with the officers; he was shown everything and permitted to investigate the deepest secrets of the army. Before leaving London, Lord Kitchener had provided Colonel Squier with authority to draw English gold from any British paymaster in the army in France as he desired and to draw it without limit. His daily life from hour to hour was that of the British officer. When he wished to pass from one Corps to the next, formal memorandum orders were issued precisely as in the case of a British officer except that only his name and rank appeared in the papers. These orders gave no hint that he belonged to the American Army. These courtesies were all in response to instructions from Kitchener's office in London. The explanation was clear enough. Neither Lord Kitchener nor the many military leaders whom Colonel Squier met in France made any concealment of their wish that the United States should enter the war. This was a point that Sir Edward Grey and the diplomats of the Foreign Office carefully evaded. but most of the important army leaders whom Colonel Squier met freely discussed the possibility; the fact that his country was "neutral" did not put the slightest restraint upon their tongues. That the real purpose of this visit was to enable the American Army to learn the details of the organization and management of modern war has always been Colonel Squier's belief. It was Lord Kitchener's plan to place before the United States the facts that would assist this country in preparing for whatever might happen. Colonel Squier was not merely a military observer; he was given access to military plans, to organization, armament, manœuvres, the quartermaster's and surgeon's department—to everything that formed the materials and the background of modern war. He was invited to make elaborate reports on all such subjects, and he did so, the British officers giving all possible help in the preparation of these documents. To long lists of questions from the War College in Washington the British officers themselves sometimes wrote the replies. The evident desire was to keep the American Army as completely informed about existing conditions and methods as was the British Army itself.

Colonel Squier wrote, frequently under gunfire and sometimes in the midst of battle, a series of reports. His position was an unprecedented one; he was technically a "neutral," an officer of a nation whose President was preaching the doctrine of "neutrality in deed and in thought," yet for five weeks he was virtually a member of the British Army. Not unnaturally he believed that Washington would be as interested in his reports as he was himself. In the United States the popular discussion of preparedness was beginning; far-sighted Americans, particularly ex-President Roosevelt and General Wood, already foresaw the possibility that the United States might be drawn into the conflict, or at least might be called upon, in case of a German victory, to fight for its own independence; in any event a wise national policy made it essential that we should abandon our antiquated methods and reorganize an army on the lines made necessary by the present war. The great advantage of Colonel Squier's visit was that it would provide the basis for such an organization. He did his work with the utmost zeal and industry, and report after report was sent to Washington. Had the American Army acted upon the information thus dispatched, it would have had a policy and a program, if not an army, on the Declaration of War in 1917, and thus been prepared, to a great extent, for hostilities. How many lives would have been saved, and how much money would have been conserved, can be only guessed at. Certainly the course of history would have been very different. Colonel Squier sent his reports to the War College, therefore, with the satisfaction that any man feels at having performed a great task. Washington, however, manifested no interest in them. They were deposited in appropriate pigeon-holes—where they still remain. How many officers read them is not known; that no action was ever taken is the fact.

Telegram to the Secretary of State

London,
January 6, 1915.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington,
1423, January 6, 3 P. M.
Very confidential and private.

Although practically all governments have asked British and French military authorities for permission to send military officers with Allies' armies and have had in London since the war began officers of high rank waiting for permission, no military officer of any country has yet been allowed to go to the front except Colonel Squier, our attaché. This notable exception in our favour both Colonel Squier and I think ought to be made known to you.

His going was very secretly arranged and is under no circumstances to be made known. It is known here only to a few of the highest officials, and the officers of other armies are kept in ignorance. Colonel Squier remained at the front five weeks, visited generals of every corps of the British Army, saw every sort of military operations in progress, from front trenches a few yards from the enemy back to bases; he was treated with the greatest courtesy and cordiality, was permitted to see everything, and throughout kept a diary. He is just returned to London and has been informally told that in the near future he may go to the front again if no word of his visit leaks out. His report when he can make it will be of the greatest military value.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, London.

To the President

London, January 12, 1915.

Confidential to the last degree.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Colonel Squier, our military attaché (and a thoroughbred if ever I knew one) has just come back from five weeks at the front mainly with the English but partly also with the French officers in command. He is the only soldier of any army who has been allowed to go. Not more than half-a-dozen men in London know that Squier has been to the front. He and I had to do all sorts of things to get permission. I formally transferred him to our French Embassy; he formally presented himself to a series of French military authorities; Joffre received him; then, after more of this freemasonry, he was permitted to go to General French's headquarters where he presented a note which read somewhat like this: "Dear FRENCH: Here's Colonel Squier, you know.—KITCHENER." He lived with the officers and men (in every English corps) for five weeks and nothing was concealed. He went in the trenches. Bombs missed him only a few yards time and again.—Why all this secrecy, you ask? For several reasons and for no reason but the English silence. In the first place, any man who can't fall in and take care of himself is in the way. Then, they don't want it reported. Squier is bound to silence till the war ends. The favour shown to Squier, as I make it out, comes partly as a compliment to the United States and partly as a personal compliment to Squier. He knows them from Kitchener down, they have great respect for his judgment and his knowledge. Squier is a West Point man, a Hopkins Ph. D., a distinguished inventor, you know, and a member of all the learned scientific societies in

London, and a fine military scholar. He talks and writes with the directness and simplicity of a child. Well, he has a lot of lessons. His Report (my guess is) will be a military document of very great value, as I'm sure his brief diary is, which I have read.

. . . And except for the noise of the guns it's a silent war. No bugles, no music, no shouted commands. The officers dress as the men: even a strip of red on the collar is too good a target. The officer gives his orders by silent motions; nobody speaks. Nobody wears a sword, or a riband, or a stripe—just deadly, silent, grim striving to death.

No army has begun to report all its dead. In fact, it is doubtful if the commanders themselves know their losses with accuracy. Recruits are all the time coming, and new men take the vacant places in the old regiments.

The horror of this thing outruns all imagination. Yet somehow nobody seems to realize it—men marched into the trenches to as certain slaughter as cattle when they are driven into the killing house in a stockyard. There's no chance to escape—so nearly no chance that it need hardly be counted. There's nothing of the old "glory" of war—the charge, the yell, the music, the clash, and the giving way of one side or of the other. That's all gone. When they bayonet one another to death, more men come from the rear and fill the same ditches. Just plain, beastly butchery of men in such numbers as were never before killed in battle in so short a time, every mollifying thing gone—use any weapon, lie in the mud wounded for twelve hours, lie dead unburied for days! And when bombs strike a farmhouse and kill a family, that's not a subject even of passing remark.

Some of the English officers said to Colonel Squier:

"How are we to get out of this? The awfulness of it passes belief. But what can we do? Run and let the Germans take the coast and Paris? That's our only alternative. We can hold them and kill them and be killed ourselves till their nerve gives out, or their men are exhausted, or their ammunition is all gone; but until some one or more of these things happen we can't drive them far; nor can they drive us."

The Allies can keep putting in millions of men with ammunition and food so long as they can get them as they now get them. The Germans also can keep the same pace a very long time—unless the Russians require an ever-increasing German army on the east; and whenever the Russians get into German territory there will be another trench deadlock. The two trench deadlocks will, of course, at last wear the Germans out; but if it go on as this deadlock has now been in France for several months, the war may last five years. By that time most surviving men in Germany, France, and England, and hundreds of thousands in Russia, will be cripples; and this side of the world will consist chiefly of women.

Of course this sort of thing can't go on till annihilation have overtaken them. But I can't yet see how it can be ended till Germany will agree to restore Belgium. When Germany will agree to that—after Russia has got Constantinople—then, no doubt, some arrangement might be discussed. Sir Edward Grey told me within a week that not a word about peace or terms of peace had yet been spoken between the Allies. The taking of Ostend, the effort to reach Calais and the bombardment of the east-coast towns of England indefinitely postponed England's willingness to consider peace. So far as I recall my English history, this race was never before so united and so determined in any struggle.

Telegram to the Secretary of State

London, January 15, 1915, 9 P. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE:

I lunched to-day with French who came here secretly for a council of war. He talked of course in profound confidence.

He said the military situation is a stalemate. The Germans cannot get to Paris or to Calais. On the other hand, it will take the Allies a year, perhaps two years, and an incalculable loss of men to drive the Germans through Belgium. It would take perhaps four years and unlimited men to invade Germany. He has little confidence in the ability of Russian aid in conquest of Germany. Russia has whipped Austria and will whip Turkey. But he hopes for little more from her. . . .

Speaking only for himself and in profoundest confidence he told me of a peace proposal which he said the President, at Germany's request, has submitted to England. He tells me that this proposal is to end the war on condition that Germany give up Belgium and pay for its restoration. French's personal opinion is that England would have to accept such an offer if it should be accompanied with additional offers to satisfy the other Allies. Such, for example, as the restoration to France of Alsace-Lorraine and the agreement that Russia shall have Constantinople.

I had an agreeable and friendly acquaintance with General French before the war and he has sent me several personal messages from the front. But I cannot help suspecting that he had a further purpose than a mere friendly talk in telling me these things. He seemed so much surprised when I confessed that I had not heard of such a proposal, that I felt that possibly he held back something *else for the President that he had it in mind to say.* He was solicitous to find out my opinion whether this peace proposal had been made in good faith or whether it was probably a German move to affect public opinion in the United States.

Colonel Squier had an interview to-day with Lord Kitchener whose military opinion coincides with General French's.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, London.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
January 12, 1915.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

There is no such thing as fair international reporting of documents or speeches—there isn't often even intelligent reporting. The condensed form of our note to the British Government which was telegraphed here gave an impression of bumptiousness that was, of course, wholly absent from the Note when it was read in full. They've got over that, however. But yesterday afternoon and to-day a few sentences are published from your Indiana speeches which seem to make you intimate—not quite say, but intimate—that you must be called in to settle the quarrel. This does no positive harm; but to such persons as may believe that you said what these detached sentences hint that you said (which, I'll bet principalities and powers you did not say at all) it will seem that you do not understand the war or the feeling about it here or in Germany. As I say, this isn't worth a second thought—only the universal feeling here is that nobody can compose the trouble till something more decisive is done in battle. The English will not think of peace until their new army of 2,000,000 men go out in the spring. They've taken their stand on (at the very least) the complete restoration of Belgium; and that isn't in sight. There is no bitterness, but there is a steadily growing grim determination. It is the English way—always has been the English way. How to pull the English off—that's a hard thing to say, as it is a hard thing to say how to pull a bulldog off. The doctors in the hospitals say that when a German knows he's going to die, his emotions all break forth and he weeps pitifully; a Frenchman sobs and asks for his mother; but Tommy Atkins is silent, as if he had a secret with the Almighty. Whether he is in the War Office or in the Admiralty or in the trenches, he surely is the least communicative of men when he becomes desperately in earnest. A few weeks ago five members of the staff of one of the English generals were killed one afternoon by a shell. The survivors a few hours afterward sat down to dinner as usual and made no reference to their five dead companions. A visitor who ate with them did not know from anything that was said or done at dinner that anything had happened. Thus they go on, without the slightest personal bitterness, determined to win, perfectly willing to die, but stubbornly silent. One of the famous preachers in London preached Sunday against complaining; for, he said, we have not been called upon for nearly a century to save our civilization and to save Europe. A noblewoman who has sent five sons to the war—one dead, one a prisoner, two wounded, and one she does not know where—sought the preacher and said:

"I agree with you; but, pray tell me, who *has* complained? I haven't heard one complaint."

"Who's complaining?" the woman with five soldier sons asked. Yes; but the depression of it! I don't know how much human nerves can stand. But I often have a feeling that some day, without warning, everybody will simply collapse—just give out. Something will snap. All this part of the world can't continue to live under this strain. I have several times heard men say, "Yes, I'm going to the front. Of course, I shall never come back. That's all right. We've got to win." After a million or two have done that—what then? Can the rest keep going?

Nothing keeps the war out of mind long. I have during the week talked with Sir Edward Grey about it and Winston Churchill and Lord Haldane. They know nothing more than I write you: I'm sure they talk to me quite freely. They feel that they must simply go ahead. They hope that the Russians will hold out and do so much damage that the Germans will agree to restore Belgium. Meantime Hoover, of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium—a very able American engineer—was discussing the military situation quite freely in Brussels with two German generals and Whitlock. He tells me identically the same thing that Squier brought back from the other side—a hopeless deadlock.—By the way, when Whitlock goes about Brussels, wherever he passes a group of the common people, they uncover their heads and the women curtsey and they whisper to one another: "That's the American Minister." They give him credit for saving the city and for having food brought to them now. It is infinitely touching. I wish we were all straight, unhesitating brave men like Whitlock; you found the right man the day you chose him. Hold fast to him. He's more than a diplomat: he's a man.

Life is worth more, too, for knowing Hoover. But for him Belgium would now be starved, however generously people may have given food. He's gathering together and transporting and getting distributed $5,000,000 worth a month, with a perfect organization of volunteers, chiefly American. He has a fleet of thirty-five ships, flying the Commission's flag—the only flag that all belligerents have entered into an agreement to respect and to defend. He came to me the other day and said, "You must know the Commission is $600,000 in debt. But don't be uneasy. The Commission has given its note for it." The next day Hoover brought in the Belgian Minister of Finance who brought him $1,000,000 from the run-away Belgian Government. Both the English and the Belgian cabinets send for him about Belgian matters. He's a simple, modest, energetic man who began his career in California and will end it in Heaven; and he doesn't want anybody's thanks. The surplus food being near exhaustion in the United States and Canada, he has now begun on the Argentine, where the crop is just coming on. I introduced him to the Argentine Minister the other day, and the Minister said to me afterwards: "Somehow I feel like doing what that man asked me to do." A stone would weep to hear what Hoover has seen in Belgium—pitiful beyond all telling. Refugees are still coming here in considerable numbers, and the English take them in their homes. My daughter goes every day to help at one of the receiving and distributing places, where poor women come in demented from terror: they do not know their own names. When she speaks to them in French, they begin—some of them—to come to their senses: some never do.—The pathos of all this—the sin and misery of it—God! life has nothing left for about half the people on the Continent. It would be a mercy to be shot. You weep at every corner of whatever road you travel until you can weep no more.—There was a meeting in Brussels a little while ago of prominent men. The patriarch of the meeting was a cultivated and (formerly) rich old gentleman now past eighty, a fine old character who, I am told, is known and respected all over Europe. He got it into his head somehow that I had done far more for the Commission than I have done or could do; and he wrote me a letter, which he took to Whitlock and asked him to send to me. I can quote it because you know I don't deserve it; but I have not many times in my life been so touched. He concluded his courteous French letter, in all sincerity, thus: "I offer my homage and kiss your hand in profound gratitude—with the sublimest admiration for your generous great country. Adieu. We shall soon all pass. But God does not forget."

One reflection that saves us from collapse is—the world is as infinitely kind as it is unspeakably cruel.

Collapse—that's what we are witnessing, a gigantic collapse, not a mere war—something far more than that; and individual kindness and unspeakable pathos run through it all.

Since the Allies have not even considered the possibility of an early peace, and since the English preparation for the war is only fairly begun, not only (so it seems to the best-informed men here whom I see) is all peace talk received with a smile or (more likely) with resentment, but all indications point to a very much more severe and determined phase of the war. The feeling is that it is just beginning. There will be very much more suffering; there will be very much more stringent regulations of every sort; there is likely to be—so there are private strong intimations—a complete cable blockade of the Continent—except the territory of the Allies. England owns all the cables. She can use them or throw them out of use, as war measures, as we did in our war with Spain. This government is sincerely and carefully friendly to us—and most sincere—but it isn't going to consider our convenience, when no clear rights are involved, in any action that it thinks necessary for victory. Victory will be won by long and hard economic pressure and by supplying unlimited men from all parts of the Empire. It is the last 100,000 men and the last £100,000 that will win. Hence the struggle is already passed out of the sentimental stage. Public opinion in England—well-informed men in private life—do not care a fig what people in the United States or anybody else think. *They* think only of winning the war. Their fortunes and their sons go—to this end—everything goes, including the friendship of the United States, if that must be: they have passed the mood where they particularly care for anything. Their own business, their own wealth, their own sons are all going. They are in no mood to consider too carefully anybody else's business or wealth.

This mood doesn't seem to me to get into the papers. I sometimes wonder if it be understood in the United States.

In all this there is no personal hatred or ferocity. It is simply a desperate fight for English independence. And I see no reason to think that they will call on any neutral in the interests of peace at any time. The belligerents will settle it themselves nobody knows when, but not till Belgium is restored and Constantinople is taken.

And the area as well as the earnestness of the war will increase. Rumania and Italy will almost surely come in. No end, therefore, is visible, as the conflict looks here.

Yet, of course, I know and you know and all thoughtful men know that the totally unexpected may happen. All our conclusions and conjectures are at best guesses. A guess here may be right or wrong. So with a guess made at Washington.

Picture to yourself, if you can, the state of feeling in

Washington and (I will say) in Boston during our Civil War, after the Battle of Gettysburg. What did people there care for feeling in England, provided only that the English Government did not go against them? The growing feeling here is somewhat like that to us—of entire good will but of increasing indifference among the public. The English public, while respectful and friendly, cares less for us now than at any time during recent years—this by a process of exclusion, since their own big problem wholly fills their minds. The Government here is frank and friendly as ever and most eager to cause us as little trouble as possible. They have not changed at all—except as I will presently explain. They are eager to keep our good will for its own sake and now also for a new reason: they do not want the Germans to have the satisfaction of seeing any difference between England and the United States. The English Government will go the full length for both these reasons.

But there is one difference I could not help seeing if I were blind, which (it has for some time seemed to me) I ought to tell you about. They make a distinction in the Foreign Office—they never *say* this and perhaps they show it all unconsciously—between communications that come from the Department and communications that the newspapers say come with your approval. The Department's insistence on the acceptance *in toto* of the Declaration of London, and the several mares' nests that the Department has found, and the sometimes "shirt-sleeve" tone of their communications causes them to take them rather *pro forma*. I fear the Government suspects that the Department suspects it. The dispatch that I received some time ago to make, in conjunction with the Consul-General, a thorough investigation of the licenses that have been granted to export copper and other things has been kept locked up in my private box. But it implied carelessness of the Government in permitting English merchants to take advantage of us, if not complicity with them. Our investigations have shown neither. I do not know that this government got any hint of our investigations, but their spy system—"intelligence bureau" they call it—discovers absolutely everything; and they may know that somebody in the State Department (I do not know who it is) seems to suspect the good faith of the British Government. This fear of mine—it is only a fear—is increased by this fact: the Department has had some correspondence or conversations with the British Ambassador in Washington which do not seem to have gone well. I *know* nothing about it, for I am seldom informed by the Department what it does in Washington. But I have heard numerous references to some Note preceding the recent one—if there was such a Note: as I say, I am always in the dark about what goes on in Washington. Lord Haldane remarked one day during his temporary occupancy of the Foreign Office that on the whole it seemed more satisfactory to deal with such questions when the mind and hand of the President were visible. And they have ceased to tell me here what Spring Rice telegraphs. For instance, altho' it is distinctly said in Sir Edward Grey's note and in the newspapers that we have come to an agreement about exporting raw rubber from England and her colonies—a subject that I had much to do with—I have no idea what the agreement is; and for four or five days I have had to tell rubber exporters and importers who have called here that I know nothing about it. If I ask the Foreign Office what the agreement is, that makes a bad matter worse: it betrays the situation.

Understand—I am not complaining: that does no good and is not my nature. I mean only that the Foreign Office makes, consciously or unconsciously, all the difference in the world between a communication or a complaint that comes from the Department and one that is understood to have your approval; and they listen less and less to what the Department says. As for its silence to me about what it does with the British Ambassador at Washington, don't trouble about that: it is beyond remedy and I have ceased to worry about it, dangerous as it is to me. I know, of course, that there is no slight meant to me: it's their way. But, as soon as this war job is passed and conditions come when I can be relieved, I shall be glad to escape the constant danger of this situation and the continual leaking of confidential information, the sending of which is necessarily reduced to a minimum by this carelessness. With the most active "intelligence" system and the most rigid suppression of information here and with the grave danger of leaking in the Department—well, I watch Scylla on this side and Charybdis on that side and keep my rudder as true as I can—understanding, too, perfectly clearly, as I think I do, the entire good will and sincere friendliness on both sides. It is not a thing to have any emotions about—only unavoidable dangers ever to keep in mind.

Heavens! how long a letter. Forgive both its length and its matter. It is written out of affectionate loyalty to you and from this volcanic outburst of all fundamental emotions. I thank Heaven I keep well under it all.

Very heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "DACIA" AND THE GERMAN-AMERICANS

I

THE story of the German merchantman *Dacia*—and Page's part in forestalling the crisis in British-American relations which it threatened—has already been told. This Presidential correspondence, however, gives the incident a new emphasis. The *Dacia* was one of the numerous German ships caught in American and other ports at the outbreak of the war. Great Britain's command of the sea kept all these vessels huddled in foreign harbours, but the war had hardly started when Congress passed a law that admitted foreign-built ships to American registry, an act that gave a great opportunity to German-Americans in the United States. A group headed by Mr. E. N. Breitung of Marquette, Michigan, purchased the *Dacia*, registered her as an American vessel, installed an American crew, raised the American flag, loaded the ship with cotton and prepared to sail for a German port. Would the British Navy seize the *Dacia* and confiscate it as enemy property? On the answer to this question might well depend peaceful relations between the United States and Great Britain. Page's dexterous suggestion that the French Navy stop the ship and take it to a prize court enabled the Allies to avoid this issue.

Americans at that time little understood the seriousness of the *Dacia* episode; there is practically nothing about it in Page's letters, the reason being that the discussion was carried on exclusively in cipher telegrams between the

London Embassy and the State Department. These telegrams, which are now available, bring home the fact that in the magnitude of the questions involved, the *Dacia* incident finds its historic parallel only in the *Trent* case of the Civil War. There were a few days in November, 1861, when it seemed impossible to avoid war between the United States and Great Britain. Peace was saved, indeed, only at the eleventh hour. Had another Ambassador than Page represented the United States in January, 1915, or had another man than Grey had charge of British foreign relations, the sailing of the *Dacia* might have had consequences of the most momentous character. Page himself describes his lengthy discussion with Sir Edward Grey on this subject as "the most ominous conversation I have ever had with him." The *Dacia* dispute was "ominous" because it involved several of the most critical issues of the war. On what side would the sympathies and possibly the support of the United States be thrown? What were the internal forces that really directed the official policy of this country? How formidable was the German-American population? Was it large enough and influential enough to control the action of the authorities at Washington? Above all the *Dacia* involved the great question of the use of British sea power. The most impressive feature of the European conflict was the complete control of the sea exercised by Great Britain. It had already become apparent that if the Allies were to win, or even to maintain the balanced situation that prevailed, they could do so only by the majestic omnipotence of the British fleet. Would Great Britain be permitted to use this naval strength in the way that under existing conditions it could most effectively be used? The German fleet declined to leave its ports and meet the naval power of Great Britain in battle, and the result was that the Allies could use their naval strength in only one way—that is, for the purpose of blockade. The United States was the only nation strong enough to oppose Great Britain in this programme, and the possible refusal of this country to recognize the blockade was a danger that constantly confronted the Allied cause.

Such a refusal would simply have meant that the Allies would have lost any chance they may have had of winning the war. Colonel Squier's recent visit to the Western Front had made this clear. He had brought to Page and to Washington the message—a message in which both General French and Lord Kitchener agreed—that the military situation was a hopeless deadlock. Against the apparently impregnable land forces of Germany, the Allies could hardly hope to make much progress; the only recourse left was that of starving the Central Empires to submission. A survey of the highways of commerce gave promise that this plan might succeed. The great foreign commerce which Germany had spent forty years in establishing had vanished, and the merchant fleet of the Fatherland was as useless as though it were lying at the bottom of the sea. The docks of New York were lined with vessels that had long been Germany's pride, while outside of New York Harbour lay several vigilant British cruisers instantly prepared to seize any one of them that stirred beyond the three-mile limit. Because this merchant marine was so inactive, the German population lacked food that would greatly have promoted its well-being, and the German Army lacked supplies that would have greatly increased its efficiency. At that time, in January, 1915, living conditions in Germany had not reached a serious stage, for the country had well prepared for a brief war; the time would come, however—as it ultimately did—when this isolation from world markets, especially from the grain and cotton and copper of the United States, would destroy the Central Empires. If the German ships that were then marooned in American harbours should again have free access to the seas Germany would have accomplished an important step in abrogating the Allied blockade. Perhaps more ominous still, if the United States released these German ships for general commerce its action would have signified only one thing, and that is that we had cast our support on the side of Germany. We should at last have become "unneutral," and unneutral in the interest of the Central Empires.

These, therefore, were the great issues involved in the *Dacia*. This is the reason why Grey regarded that vessel as presenting the most "ominous" portent of the war. The success of the German-Americans who had chartered the ship would have meant the failure of Grey's diplomatic efforts. His chief purpose, as already explained, had been to conduct British foreign policy in a way that would make the United States at least an economic support to the Entente. Should the British fleet refrain from intercepting the *Dacia*, or should that vessel once arrive at a German or a Dutch port, Grey's policy would have gone down in ruins. If German-Americans, or German sympathizers, could purchase one German ship and restore it to the sea, they could do the same thing with the great German merchant fleet lying useless in American ports. More important still such a success would have disclosed that the German elements in this country had obtained a determining influence on American policy, and this disclosure would have been almost as fatal to the Allied cause as the breaking of their line in France. If they had obtained this preliminary victory, the Germans in this country would have proceeded with other items of their programme. The State Department had already taken the stand that the British attitude toward contraband was illegal, and it was well known that Washington would not recognize the blockade which the Allies intended soon to put in force. A victory in the *Dacia* episode would have given new inspiration to the German elements in the American population who were conducting a campaign against this blockade. It would also have encouraged them to add a new emphasis to another proposal which was now gaining considerable strength. At this time the prohibition of the shipment of American munitions to the Allies was an active question in Congress. Representative Richard Bartholdt, a man born in Germany, had introduced such a bill and was actively pushing it. It is therefore not surprising that Grey, in his talks with Page, constantly expressed his fear that German influence had gained the upper hand in the United States.

Above all, then, this was the apprehension that chiefly disturbed British statesmen. The restoration of German shipping to the seas would in itself have represented a calamity of great proportions; in the minds of the British leaders who were closely watching events in the United States the *Dacia* was important mainly as a portent—as the element in the situation which would determine whether the 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 Germans in the United States were sufficiently powerful, in a political sense, to control American policy in the interest of the Fatherland. In all Page's conversation with Grey this fear becomes the predominant note. "The talk about possible peace," Page telegraphs, "is very guarded and hesitating. Sir Edward Grey, who I think talks to me with unusual freedom, in a long unofficial conversation yesterday left the impression on my mind that until something definite came direct from Berlin there could be nothing worth discussing. There have been six 'offers' of peace, more or less vague, that have come indirectly to some one of the Allies, and these have not been frank or open. They were regarded either as dishonourable or as mere tricks to deceive the United States, unless it should be a direct open proposal. Sir Edward reminded me that whereas Englishmen in the United States become Americans many Germans in the United States remain Germans and carry on their struggle there against England. Hence the sale of passports recently unearthed to German subjects. Hence the trick played with the ship *Sacramento*. Hence Breitung's purchase of the *Dacia*. Hence Bartholdt's bill in Congress to forbid export of munitions. Hence many other acts by Germans in the United States that are part and parcel of Germany's war against England. He did not in the least imply any criticism of our government. But he made it perfectly clear that he regards the United States as one of the bases from which the Germans carry on the war in spite of our government's neutrality and in spite of the sympathy of most Americans for the Allies. They cannot buy arms there, but use the weapons of an organized propaganda in efforts to relieve England's economic pressure on Germany. These are reasons why anything that comes out of the United States arouses suspicion.

"The dangerous mood of public opinion about which I telegraphed you yesterday is largely caused by the British public's inability to make the distinction which Grey makes between the acts of our government and the acts of Germans in the United States. When they seem to coincide, as in the case of the *Sacramento* and the *Dacia*, British public opinion becomes inflammable. It continues to see what it regards as German influence in the prohibition for thirty days of ship manifests. I send you this as an effort to explain why the recently universally friendly public opinion here has become exceedingly suspicious and is fast becoming angry. People say that those Germans in America who are not Americans in fact even if some of them be so in form, are using their base of war in the United States in such ways as to nullify American neutrality. All this has so far had no open influence on this government but it is inevitable that it should have some effect on some members of the Government. When therefore General French was eager to know whether peace talk was merely a trick worked through the German war base in the United States he reflected the practically universal suspicion in and out of official life."

Telegram to Secretary of State

London, Jan. 15, 1915.

Secretary of State,
Washington.
No. 1473

I read your instruction to Lord Haldane, who is in charge of Foreign Office during temporary absence of Sir Edward Grey, and discussed every phase of the subject.

He informed me that the Cabinet had already discussed it and reached a definite conclusion as follows: The Government has no wish to obstruct the cotton trade and is aware of its importance to the producers and to the United States. If, therefore, the *Dacia* come loaded with cotton, whether bound for Rotterdam or for Bremen, the British Government would see to it that the owners of the cotton should lose nothing. The Government will buy it, paying the price which had been arranged by contract with the German buyers.

But under international law and usage, His Majesty's

Government felt bound to refer to the public refusals by the purchase and the dispatch of this ship on such an errand. The ship, therefore, will be put into the Prize Court if she come.

Lord Haldane said further that if the *Dacia* were used under bona fide American register in coast-wise trade, or in trade with South America, his government would not object. I asked him if this remark would apply to other German ships now interned in the United States and he replied "yes."

American Ambassador,
London.

Telegram to President and Secretary

London, January 18, 1915.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

For Secretary and the President. Strictly confidential. Very confidential.

I have had more than an hour's talk with Sir Edward Grey. He confirms what Haldane told me about the *Dacia*, but he does not confirm what Haldane said about other German ships in the last sentence of my 1473, January fifteenth. About this they are not agreed and the Cabinet will have further discussion. It will be prudent to disregard the last sentence above referred to. Apparently Haldane went beyond what had been agreed on by the Cabinet. My inquiry whether the British Government would object to the purchase and transfer of German-interned ships to ply between American and British ports brought from Sir Edward Grey the most ominous conversation I have ever had with him.

He explained that the chief weapon that England has against any enemy is her navy and that the navy may damage an enemy in two ways: by fighting and by economic pressure. Under the conditions of this war economic pressure is at least as important as naval fighting. One of the chief methods of using economic pressure is to force the German merchant ships off the seas. If, therefore, these be bought and transferred to a neutral flag this pressure is removed.

He reminded me that he was not making official representations to the United States Government, and for that reason he was the more emphatic. If the United States, without intent to do Great Britain an injury but moved only to relieve the scarcity of tonnage, should buy these ships, it would still annul one of the victories that England has won by her navy. He reminded me of the fast-rising tide of criticism of the United States about the transfer of the *Dacia*, and he declared that this has intensified and spread the feeling against us in England on account of our note of protest. He spoke earnestly, sadly, ominously, but in the friendliest spirit.

The foregoing only confirms the following paragraphs which I wrote yesterday and held till I could see Grey to-day. There is a steadily deepening and spreading feeling throughout every section of English opinion that the German influence in the United States has by this temptation to buy these interned ships won us to the German side. The old criticism of the President for not protesting against the violation of the Hague Treaty by Germany when she invaded Belgium is revived with tenfold its first earnestness. This is coupled with our protest against shipping as showing an unfriendly spirit. But both these criticisms were relatively mild till the *Dacia* was transferred to the American flag. That transfer added volume and vehemence to all preceding criticisms and is cited in the press and in conversation everywhere as proof of our unfriendliness. They regard the *Dacia* as a German ship put out of commission by their navy. She comes on the seas again by our permission which so far nullifies their victory. If she come here she will, of course, be seized and put into the Prize Court. Her seizure will strike the English imagination in effect as the second conquest of her, first from the Germans and now from the Americans. Popular feeling will, I fear, run as high as it ran over the *Trent* affair; and a very large part of English opinion will regard us as enemies.

If another German ship should follow the *Dacia* here I do not think that any government could withstand the popular demand for her confiscation; and if we permit the transfer of a number of these ships there will be such a wave of displeasure as will make a return of the recent good feeling between the two peoples impossible for a generation. There is no possible escape from such an act being regarded by the public opinion of this Kingdom as a distinctly unfriendly and practically hostile act.

I not only read and hear this at every turn—I feel it in the attitude of people toward me and toward our government. For the first time I have felt a distinctly unfriendly atmosphere. It has the quality of the atmosphere just before an earthquake.

The Government is studiously polite and still genuinely friendly. But there are warnings that it may not be able to maintain its old-time friendly attitude if a whirlwind of anti-American feeling sweep over the kingdom and over its Allies. Nine men out of every ten you meet in London to-day are convinced that the *Dacia* is proof that the Germans have won us to their support. I cannot exaggerate the ominousness of the situation. The case is not technical but has large human and patriotic and historic elements in it.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

II

How much reason was there for this British fear of German-American influence with the Washington Administration? In the British Cabinet there were plenty of practical politicians who, unfamiliar as they might be with all the complexities of American affairs, readily understood the power that a compact bloc of voters might wield in the counsels of a political party dependent upon popular support for its continuance in office. In Britain itself they knew that considerations like these might be regarded in the formation of public policies, and it seemed hardly likely that so expert a manipulator of political groups as Mr. Bryan, to say nothing of President Wilson himself, would ignore so demonstrative a minority as the German-Americans. The *Dacia* telegrams brought an answer directly from the President himself, an answer that has an interest that extends far beyond the *Dacia* episode. In this communication President Wilson outlined the ideas that underlay his policy in the prevailing controversies. He yielded nothing on the legal issues involved in the pending dispute. The American Government still maintained its position that the transfer of a German-built, German-owned ship to American registry did not violate international law, and placed the responsibility for her seizure upon the nation that should take this step. The President, that is, endorsed the position of Mr. Breitung and his associates, who had recently purchased the vessel, and again took issue with the British Foreign Office in the matter of the blockade. This message therefore left the two countries deadlocked as before.

Even more important, however, was President Wilson's rejoinder to the apprehension, evidently deeply lodged in the mind of Sir Edward Grey, that the German-American elements in the United States were exerting almost a decisive influence on American war policy. He even took the trouble to set the British mind right on the question of the racial constituents of the American population. Page was instructed to correct the opinion evidently prevalent in Great Britain that the United States was predominantly British in its racial composition. If the British believed that American sympathy should naturally incline to the Allies because Americans were themselves largely of British stock, such a belief, judging from the President's words, rested upon an unwarranted assumption. President Wilson's analysis was incomplete, yet his sentences did contain the implication, perhaps because of this very incompleteness, that the British elements in the United States were no longer numerically important. On the other hand the President placed emphasis upon the German and Irish contributions to the American composite. One might reasonably assume from the President's statement of the case that the British peoples formed at present merely one constituent in an extremely varied whole and that other races, especially the German, were more numerous. President Wilson was an eminent historian and would probably have denied that this interpretation was justified. Had Sir Edward Grey ever read his dispatch, however, he would not have been far wrong had he concluded that the several races in the United States exercised a certain influence upon American foreign policy, that the British stock was not large, and that German-Americans in particular were sufficiently numerous to make their voices heard in the councils of the Department of State.

"The President," Mr. Bryan telegraphed, "directs me to send the following: 'Answering your two telegrams in regard to the irritation and apparent change in public opinion regarding the United States you will please discuss the matter again with Sir Edward Grey in effect as follows: We regret exceedingly to learn that the British public entertains any doubt as to the strict neutrality of this Government or as to the support given by the general public to the Government's position. This is probably due to the fact that a portion of the British public is quite naturally uninformed as to the character of our population. While the English element predominated in the original stock the immigration in latter years has been largely from other countries. Germany and Ireland, for instance, have contributed very materially during the last half century, and among those who are the children of foreign-born parents the German element now predominates. This element is not only numerous but it has a strong representation in financial, mercantile life and agriculture. . . . There is, of course, not the slightest alteration in the cordial feeling which has always existed between the United States and Great Britain. Mere debate and newspaper agitation will not alter that feeling; but acts which seem to them arbitrary, unnecessary, and contrary to the recognized rules of neutral commerce may alter it very seriously, because the great majority of our people are trying in good faith to live within those rules, and they are sensitive about nothing more than about their legitimate trade. . . . The export of arms, ammunition, and horses to the Allies is, of course, known, and the protest made by German-Americans and by a portion of the Irish-Americans, while entirely without justification, is not unnatural. It is difficult for people to think logically when their sympathies are aroused. The Government has done all in its power to make the situation plain and has to-day issued a lengthy letter answering numerous criticisms that have been made. . . '"

Whether a great nation should guide itself even to a slight extent by the aspirations and prejudices of the different races that form its population, is a question that may be argued; it should be pointed out, however, that the President's description of the American composite, or at least the inference that may be drawn from his somewhat careless treatment of the subject, is inaccurate. The fact is that the British elements in the United States at the present time are enormously greater than those of any other people. The question was thoroughly investigated by the census bureau in 1910[1] and its report on this subject is available to any interested student. The belief that the United States is a racial conglomerate, with no one outstanding population upon which the nation rests as a secure foundation; that, in other words, there are no "Americans," is one of the most prevailing misconceptions of the day. The census report in question shows that the white population of the United States in 1790 was 3,200,000, and that practically all of this was of British and principally of English origin. This stock was extremely prolific for the first sixty years of the Republic, so prolific, indeed, that by 1910, this original population had increased to 39,000,000. In the last hundred years the immigration from England, Scotland, and Wales, as well as from the British provinces in Canada, has been much greater than is popularly believed. The official conclusion is that, of the 94,000,000 white men, women, and children, living in the United States in 1910, about 55,000,000 traced their origin to England, Scotland, and Wales. This, then, is approximately the British contribution to the American population. The race that ranks next to the British is the German, who numbered, according to the census of 1910, 8,200,000, and next to this the Irish, 4,500,000. It is an almost startling fact that this native American population forms the largest body of Anglo-Saxons in the world. It is larger than the combined population of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Compared with it the other stocks in the United States are exceedingly small. It is quite apparent therefore that President Wilson's discussion of the subject, if not inaccurate, or misleading, was certainly incomplete.

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[1] See "A Century of Population Growth in the United States," published by the United States Census Bureau.

Page asked permission to withhold this dispatch for the time being and present its contents to Sir Edward Grey "when a favourable opportunity occurs." It may safely be assumed that this "favourable opportunity" never came. In this struggle, as ultimately in all others, the German-Americans failed. The Administration did not waver in its attitude, and the *Dacia*, loaded with cotton, sailed for a European port. Page, as related in a previous volume, had dropped a hint to the British that its seizure by a French vessel would probably not cause a "diplomatic incident." The points involved were precisely the same, but the "atmosphere" would be quite different. Sentiment was still a strong emotion with Americans; memories of the Revolution were keen, and the traditional American friendship for France an active force; thus it would be impossible to rouse the popular mind against "depredations" committed by the French Navy. Page's advice was followed; as soon as the *Dacia* appeared in the British Channel a French cruiser seized her, took her into a French harbour, and put her in a French prize court. Thus ended the great German-American plan to restore the interned German merchant vessels to the seas. No more *Dacias* sailed from American ports, and the great German merchant fleet interned in the United States remained there until the American Government, on its own declaration of war, itself took possession of the German ships. By a threat of resignation, Page had persuaded Washington to back down on the Declaration of London, and now, by a quiet hint dropped to Sir Edward Grey, he had prevented the *Dacia* crisis from becoming what the *Trent* crisis almost became in 1861—the cause of war between the United States and Great Britain—with consequences to the future of mankind too appalling to contemplate.

CHAPTER IX

THE "LUSITANIA"

I

THE *Lusitania* was torpedoed May 7, 1915. Page's experiences during that period have already been described, and the letters written both to the President and Colonel House have been printed.[1] Several telegrams sent the President and the Secretary of State, however, add emphasis to his views. The following message, dated May 8th, the day after the *Lusitania* disaster, is the earliest official paper dealing with the great issues raised by this calamity. In it Page reports the British and the European view that the United States, by declaring war at that time, could quickly bring the conflict to an end.

Telegram to the President

London, May 8 [1915], 5 P. M.

Confidential in the extreme. For the President and the Secretary only. As nearly as I can interpret public opinion here as affected by the sinking of the *Lusitania*, it is as follows, which I transmit for your information:

A profound effect has been produced on English opinion in general regarding both the surprising efficiency of the German submarine work and the extreme recklessness of the Germans. The sinking of the *Lusitania*, following the use of poisonous gas and the poisoning of wells and the torpedoing of the *Gulflight* and other plainly marked neutral ships, the English regard as the complete abandonment of war regulations and of humanity in its conduct, as well as of any consideration for neutrals. Sir Edward Grey said to me last night, "They are running amuck." It is war under the black flag. Indignation in the aggregate reached a new pitch.

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[1] Volume II, Chapter XV.

Official comment is of course reticent. The freely expressed unofficial feeling is that the United States must declare war or forfeit European respect. So far as I know this opinion is universal. If the United States come in, the moral and physical effect will be to bring peace quickly and to give the United States a great influence in ending the war and in so reorganizing the world as to prevent its recurrence. If the United States submit to German disregard of her citizens' lives and of her property and of her neutral rights on the sea, the United States will have no voice or influence in settling the war or in what follows for a long time to come. This, so far as I can ascertain, is the practically unanimous opinion here. The Americans in London are outspoken to the same effect.

Much the profoundest depression is felt to-day that has been felt since the war began and British opinion is stirred to its depths.

The foreign editor of the *Times*,[1] a usually well-informed and trustworthy man, who knows all the principal European statesmen, is just returned from a week in France. He tells me in strictest confidence that England, France, and Russia made a bargain with Italy on April 30th, agreeing to cede to Italy very large parts of Austrian territory some of which has a Slavic population, if Italy come into the war within a month. This was done without consulting Serbia and against her wishes. Italy will soon come in if she keep her agreement, to be followed by Rumania. I have heard unofficial confirmation of this agreement here.

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[1] H Wickham Steed.

The same editor informs me that General Joffre told him that he is confident that he would break through the German lines within a month.

I have heard the opinion expressed to-day in several well-informed but unofficial quarters that warlike action by the United States would be a signal for other neutral nations whose rights Germany has disregarded, especially the Scandinavian countries and possibly Holland. For the correctness of this view I cannot vouch but I know it is widely entertained.

American Ambassador,
London.

The sequel made it sufficiently plain that any policy remotely resembling this was not contemplated by the White House. That the suggestion was unwelcome appears from a brief letter written by the President to Mr. Bryan who was then—and for a short time afterward—Secretary of State. In the archives of the State Department President Wilson's letter is attached to the original copy of Page's historic telegram. This small sheet of paper pictures one of the most critical moments in the war. Page's message was received less than twenty-four hours after the *Lusitania* had gone down with the loss of more than one hundred American lives. It reached the White House late at night. At that moment President Wilson was the one man above all others in whose hands the future of America and Europe lay. Every mind and every heart in two continents were centred upon that solitary figure in the White House. Popular emotion in the United States had seldom reached the intensity that then stirred nearly a hundred million Americans.

Whatever differences of opinion and sentiment may have appeared in the nearly two years of discussion that ensued, there is not the slightest doubt that Americans, or the vast majority of them, sympathized at that moment with the views set forth in Page's telegram. That Mr. Wilson kept himself carefully secluded from popular emotions for the few days following the *Lusitania* is well known. He saw no members of his Cabinet, not even the member whose department was chiefly concerned with that event. For several days Mr. Bryan held himself in readiness for the Presidential call, but Mr. Wilson never summoned him. So far as is known, Mr. Wilson's only communication with his Secretary of State, preceding the Cabinet meeting of Tuesday, May 12th, was the extremely brief but enlightening note written concerning Page's urgent telegram, printed above. The letter was typewritten, evidently by the President's own hand, for the type has the familiar character of the Hammond machine, on which the President typed his own messages and confidential documents.

It appears at once that Page's presentation of the *Lusitania* case fell upon unsympathetic ears. The President's comment is dated May 10th, which was the Sunday after the sinking had taken place. It was on the evening of the same day that the President went to Philadelphia and delivered the speech in which were embedded the celebrated words, "There is such a thing as a nation being too proud to fight." The letter to Mr. Bryan, which must have been the only light he obtained upon the President's views before the first *Lusitania* note was handed to him for signature and which, as a matter of fact, is probably the only evidence existing of the state of the presidential mind at this crisis, is as follows:

The President to the Secretary of State

The White House, Washington,
10 May, 1915.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

After all, this* does not express Page's own opinion, but what he takes to be public opinion at the moment in Great Britain.

It is a very serious thing to have such things thought, because everything that affects the opinion of the world regarding us affects our influence for good.

Faithfully yours,
W. W.

*Page's dispatch about the *Lusitania* which I find I have burned.

The next day Page again became urgent:

Telegram to the President

London, May 11, 1915.

2080, May 11, 1 P. M.

Confidential. To the Secretary and the President.

Continuing my report of British feeling and opinion. Every day without news of definite action by the American Government about the *Gulflight* and the *Lusitania* deepens the British suspicion into a conviction that our government will content itself with mere argumentative protests. The respectful and sympathetic silence of the first few days' excitement is now giving way to open criticism of American failure to realize the situation and of American unwillingness to act. There is a good deal of contempt in British feeling. This contempt is not based upon British wish for military help, but on the feeling that America falls short morally to condemn German methods and has fallen victim to German propaganda and does not properly rate German character as shown in war nor understand German danger to all free institutions. Fear grows of a moral failure on the part of the United States.

The most conservative action hoped for by the best friends of America here is that diplomatic relations be severed with Germany pending satisfactory settlement and that Congress be convened so that the voice of the nation may be heard.

The aristocratic element of English life, which enjoys social and governmental privileges and is what we should call reactionary, consciously or unconsciously hopes for American inactivity to justify their distrust of democratic institutions. Their feeling is that Great Britain will emerge from the war far more powerful than ever and they are content that the United States should be of as slight influence in the world as possible. The few expressions that the United States will remain neutral and will refrain from breaking off diplomatic relations with Germany come from this element of English society and unofficially from governing circles.

Official life here is studiously silent to me. The few persons who have called to express condolence or who have written letters of sympathy about the *Lusitania* are all, I think, more or less close personal friends who feel free to speak for personal reasons.

The impression is clear that delay in definite action in some really effective form or failure to act definitely will shut the United States out of British and I should guess of all European respect for a generation.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

Telegram to the President

London, May 12, 1915.

2091, May 12, 5 P. M.

Confidential. To the Secretary and the President.

A memorial service for the *Lusitania* victims, including American victims, is being arranged in St. Paul's. I have insisted there shall be no sermon or discourse.

The feeling among Americans in London, residents and visitors, increases. More than one group has prepared resolutions critical of what they regard as our government's delay. I am encouraging Hoover and others in the efforts they are making to prevent a mass meeting of Americans which I hope will be successful.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

President Wilson's first *Lusitania* note gave Page great satisfaction. In it the President severely arraigned Germany and virtually demanded that she abandon unrestricted submarine warfare, disavow the *Lusitania* sinking and pay an indemnity. The alternative—such was the interpretation generally given this note in the United States and in Europe—was war with this country. "The Imperial German Government," said Mr. Wilson, "will not expect the Government of the United States to omit any word or any act necessary to the performance of its sacred duty of maintaining the rights of the United States and its citizens, and of safeguarding their free exercise and enjoyment." Such was the concluding sentence of the first *Lusitania* note and it was accepted as definitely committing the United States to vigorous action. In itself it sufficiently accounts for the tone of Page's next message.

Telegram to the President

London, May 16, 1915.

2104, May 16, 10 P. M.

Commendation of the note to Germany and gratification are universally expressed privately and in the press. The *Times* says: "It is a note that both in substance and expression recalls the best traditions of American diplomacy. The stand taken by President Wilson is something more than a declaration of national policy. Nothing less than the conscience of humanity makes itself audible in his measured and incisive sentences." The *Times* editorial ends in these words: "The moral interests of the United States and the Allies are henceforward indissolubly linked."

The *Westminster Gazette* says: "We count this note as from all human and moral points of view the greatest event of this war."

(*Cipher*) The following is in the Secretary's private code and confidential to the President and the Secretary. Among the men whose private expressions of praise have come to me are most members of the Government as well as Lansdowne, Balfour, and Bonar Law, of the opposition.

I think the practically unanimous expectation here is that the German Government will give an evasive answer and decline to abbreviate the use of submarines against merchant ships.

The representatives of other neutral governments here privately express pleasure and gratitude. The Americans in London about whose impatience I telegraphed feel ashamed of their hasty fears.

May I be allowed to express my personal congratulations on the note?

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

However, this satisfaction was short lived. Germany's absurd answer to this first *Lusitania* note, in which she practically ignored the points insisted on by President Wilson, and defended her action on the ground that the torpedoed vessel was a warship, itself armed with guns and carrying munitions and troops to Great Britain; her refusal to accept the President's demands; the Kaiser's policy of evasion and delay; and the President's failure to follow his imperious words with acts, produced that doubt in Page's mind and, afterward, that complete divergence of views and sympathy, that now become the prevailing tone in the Ambassador's communications. Mr. Lansing's succession to the State Department after Mr. Bryan's resignation did little to improve British-American relations. From the beginning of the war, indeed, Mr. Lansing, as Counsellor of the Department, had formulated and directed American policy in the blockade. Now that he had become Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing insisted, more energetically than ever, that this blockade was illegal, and it is perhaps not strange that the feeling became broadcast that if the American Government were not anti-British it was at least not especially sympathetic to the cause of the Allies. As the summer wore on, the fear in Washington that the German submarine campaign would result in a crisis between the United States and Germany becomes more apparent. Any step that would ruffle German sensibilities was carefully avoided. Word came to Page—or at least Page so interpreted an indirect message—that it might be well for him to go to the United States for a face-to-face discussion. He intimated a willingness, even an eagerness to do so. President Wilson, however, abruptly vetoed the plan. "He thinks," telegraphed Mr. Lansing, "that it would be very unwise for you to come at this time, since it would create an impression that something unusually critical and of a most confidential nature had arisen which could not be handled by correspondence." Even trifles revealed the sensitiveness of Washington on the subject of German relations:

To the Secretary of State

London, June 22, 1915.

2329, June 22.

John S. Sargent, the distinguished American artist resident in London, has a decoration conferred several years ago by the German Emperor, which he now wishes to return. He has handed me a note addressed to the proper Court authority in Berlin respectfully returning the decoration, and he asks me if he may send it to you under cover of a letter, requesting you to ask Gerard to deliver it in Berlin or if I under your instructions may send it to Gerard direct.

The return of such honours has become quite common between Englishmen and Germans.

He asks me also if I may transmit through Gerard his resignation from two notable art societies in Berlin and Munich.

Sargent makes no criticism of German Government or German societies in his letters but merely resigned because he is no longer in sympathy with German aims. I await instructions.

American Ambassador,
London.

From the Secretary of State

Washington, June 23, 1915.

Your 2329, June 22.

Not matters with which Department or its officers abroad can have any connection.

Sargent should reimburse Embassy for your telegram and pay for this reply, five dollars.

LANSING.

To the President

London, July 15, 1915.

2462, July 15, 11 A. M.

Confidential. For the President and the Secretary.

I interpret thoughtful and responsible opinion here as follows and send it as in the past for your information. Germany reckons on American unpreparedness for war and hopes that pro-German sentiment can prevent munitions from going to the Allies, arguing that, if pro-German sentiment fail, the United States cannot fight and therefore the risk of insulting us is negligible, since, as a neutral, her enemies obtain help from us through their command of the seas, and as an enemy we could do no more harm than we now do.

The feeling seems to be that Germany can never be permitted to give us a satisfactory answer, and that if we do not take effective action of some sort we shall lose the confidence and respect of the Allies and in time have to face Germany alone; that if democracy as represented by the United States yield, its standing in the world will be gone for an indefinite time and its advocates weakened in every country.

Men here point out the similarity of Germany's dealing with the United States to her dealing with England, always by evasion, and they point to England's mistake in hoping to avoid war and not equipping an army ten years ago. They say that unless German military power is crushed by the crushing of the professional military party, all the world will be terrorized, and that we must range out effectively against this menace without delay or suffer ultimately whatever the outcome of the present struggle may be.

I think this opinion is practically universal here among thoughtful men. They are saddened by it but regard it as practically certain that we cannot escape; that the Germans will continue assassination and incendiarism in the United States and will sooner or later destroy more American travellers.

British opinion has great and growing confidence in the President himself but seems to show a doubt about the virility and courage of American public opinion, attributing to it a timidity arising from failure to grasp the scope of the issues involved in the struggle and the effect of its outcome on the United States.

American Ambassador,
London.

Telegram to the President

London, August 24, 1915.

Confidential for the Secretary and the President.

I report the following as indicating public opinion here for whatever it may be worth, if it be worth anything.

Sir William Mather,[1] who, you know, is a good representative of conservative-minded, non-political, thoughtful Englishmen, called to see me yesterday to express the friendly grave fear lest delay in action should deepen the impression throughout Europe that the United States is seeking to maintain peace at the price of humiliation in the face of repeated offences. This fear is becoming more or less general, even among thoughtful men.

The reported intention of our government, published here, to give Germany another opportunity to explain and thereby to evade and to cause delay provokes the general opinion that any delayed action on our part will lose much of its moral effect by tardiness.

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[1] Of Manchester; a prominent Liberal and one of the leaders in education in Great Britain.

The tone of the less responsible press is a tone of open ridicule. The tone of the best papers shows surprise at what they regard as an unfortunate delay and a restrained fear lest the United States delay too long.

Several men in official life have expressed opinions such as the opinion that follows. They have spoken, not to me but in quarters where they knew I should hear it: "The Germans shuffled and evaded and lied to us for ten years and we refused to believe that this was their deliberate policy. The Americans seem slow to learn by our experience. They have a contempt for the United States as they had for England and they hope to keep her writing letters at which they laugh."

The facts about the *Arabic*[1] seem so clear here as to leave no doubt of her deliberate sinking by the German submarine without any protection. The testimony of all survivors is identical on all important particulars.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

Telegram to the President

London, September 8, 1915.

Strictly confidential. For the Secretary and the President only.

The feeling even of conservative men here seems hardening into the conviction that the United States is losing the fear and therefore the respect of foreign governments and of foreign opinion. The sinking of the *Arabic* and the apparent acceptance of Bernstorff's assurance of the cessation of submarine attacks on passenger ships created a bad impression because the assurance was not frank and specific and because no mention was made of the *Lusitania*. Fear of the same acquiescence in the torpedoing of the *Hesperian* is provoking ridicule and is fortifying the belief that we will desist from action under any provocation. This feeling is not confined to those who would like to have us enter the war, but it exists among our best friends, who think we ought to keep out of actual war. They seem to construe our attitude as proof of weakness and there is danger that whatever we may say hereafter will be listened to with less respect. I think I detect evidence already of a diminishing respect for our communications. The impression grows that the "peace at any price" type of man has control of American opinion. Dumba's remaining would certainly tend to deepen this feeling into a permanent conviction.

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[1] Torpedoed August 19, 1915.

You must read this not as my opinion but as my interpretation of responsible opinion here. Men here are of course likely to form judgments on partial selfishness, but I have tried to leave out of account the ordinary temporary selfish section of public opinion and to include only that which looks as if it may become the permanent English judgment of the American democracy. Thinking men persist in regarding the United States as a more or less loose aggregation of different nationalities, without national unity, national aims, or definite moral qualities.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,
London.

To the President

London, August 19, 1915.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

As this amazing tragedy unfolds itself we know only imperfectly what is happening and we can only guess what is going to happen. But from what I hear and can infer we had as well prepare our minds and our plans for a long war yet. If the Allies make a peace that leaves the Germans really victorious, they'll have to fight again, perhaps with fewer of them united than now. They'd rather suffer extinction now than later, and they'll not quit till they are obliged to quit or till they win. I hear that neither side can win in France. The report (private) here is that a little while ago the French, with half-a-million men, tried to break through the German line, that they advanced about five miles and had lost more than two hundred thousand, and that they then gave it up. It is said also that the Germans have no expectation of breaking through in France. If these reports be true and for the present at least they seem true, the land-war will be decided in Turkey, in the Balkans, or in Russia, tho' Russian defeat alone can decide nothing. This seems to mean a long struggle—through the winter and nobody knows how much longer. England is alive to the peril, and she'll spend her last shilling and (eventually) send her last man. She regards English civilization as at stake. And England is so slow that she'll not marshall all her strength till the other Allies are exhausted. No end, therefore, seems in sight.

But following this war, as there followed all preceding great wars, will be great changes in the rules of the game as between belligerents. Men used to say that the machines of destruction would become so terrible as to make war impossible, for it would mean mere extermination. The war in France is already that—the only question is, which side will be exterminated? The trench, the machine-gun, the hand-mortar, the hand-grenade, and gas (yet in its experimental stage) are killing men in such numbers that neither the French nor the Germans report the facts—to say nothing of explosive shells from howitzers. Several British regiments now contain hardly a man—private or officer—who first went out. The gentle euphemism for this annihilation is "wastage." Fighting above ground is obsolete where both sides are "scientific." And annihilation is going on in France as fast as any theorist could wish. Of course it takes time to annihilate millions of men: the army unit has increased so enormously. And the population of parts of Poland is suffering annihilation, as a part of the population of northern France and of Belgium did. Starvation and the use of gas will become conventionalized in future wars, whether "legalized" or not. In fact, they are already accepted weapons in this war. The mistake made by those who predicted that the horrors of war with new engines would make wars impossible was not a mistake about annihilation but about the shrinking of men from being annihilated. No such fear stops them. In fact it looks as if war now means practical extermination. If the Belgians ever get into Germany or the Germans ever get into England or Italy, something very closely akin to extermination will follow. Men were once horrified by the use of the cross-bow in war, and by the use of guns—all the old rules of sword and pike war were knocked out by these dishonourable new weapons of indiscriminate destruction. So the art of killing moves on towards a gas that will annihilate an army or devastate a province.

As for our controversy with Great Britain, this seems to me as good a forecast as can now be made: The blockade, as defended by Sir Edward Grey, rests on his citations of American action during the Civil War and on his willingness, if need be, to submit disputes to arbitration. Unless some influence that I do not now foresee comes in to play a part, this government will stand on that contention. They will conduct the blockade as favourably to us as they can bring themselves to do; but they are persuaded, perhaps over-persuaded, that the economic pressure on Germany is their strongest weapon. Public opinion here takes that view more and more decisively, and members of both parties that form the Coalition Government have committed themselves to this belief. Since they are willing to submit their action to arbitration—taking the risk of another *Alabama* award—they hope to get through on this basis. I think we did a good stroke in drawing from Sir Edward Grey his note declaring his willingness to submit to arbitration. This seems to me our real triumph so far in the controversy.

The trouble that the controversy gives you they follow and share. They know the Hoke Smiths[1] and the other agitators and they have their share of alarm. But (I think) they are going to keep up their economic pressure on Germany at all hazards. The public will rend the Government if it does not.

Yet thoughtful men here know that Great Britain will come out of this war at the best with great financial and commercial embarrassment, and at the worst practically bankrupt along with all the other European governments; and they know that the United States will have a prodigious advantage over any other country for a generation or two, which (barring some great misfortune to us) will mean a prodigious advantage for all time. They wish, therefore, to stand close to us, for selfish reasons, reasons of self-preservation, as well as for reasons of civilization—the preservation of Anglo-Saxon institutions and aspirations. If we get through this war amicably with the British, they will be more friendly to us[1] than they have ever been, since we have not only the largest English-speaking white population but will have the start also definitely towards financial and commercial supremacy. Their predominant financial grip on the world, which is their main grip, will be gone. And, tho' they have not lost their virility, they have never acquired our efficiency. They are slow and unadaptable and tradition-ridden and class-ridden yet. On any street-corner in London you have to buy one afternoon paper from one man, another from another and a third from a third. It has never occurred to any one man to sell two or more papers. I passed two men the other day in the country each trying to coax a horse hitched to a great load of hay up a steep hill. Each horse had more than it could pull. I said, "Why don't you hitch both horses to one cart, pull that up and then come back and get the other cart in the same way?" After a moment of surprised silence and deep thought, one of them answered, "We've never done that, sir," and he went on urging his horse up inch by inch. That night at a country hotel, lighted by electricity, they charged me for candles.

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[1] Senator from Georgia and a vigorous protestant against the British blockade.

"But I had no candles."

"Yes, sir, but we've always done that."

These little experiences explain the lack of munitions six months after the munition works had been begging for orders. They explain the effort to take the Dardanelles without an army. They explain the postponement of conscription, although everybody knows that England will have to put her last available man in the army. The amazing thing is, the men who sell only one paper each continue to sell them, the men with the carts do get up the hill, the hotel landlady got my money for candles, the Government is getting munitions at last, and the Dardanelles will be taken even if all Egypt has become a vast hospital for English needlessly wounded. In none of these activities, however, has the Englishman had the direct competition of the Yankee. When he encounters that, good-bye, John. And that's what he will encounter when the war ends and leaves him poor.

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[1] I should say more dependent on us, rather than more friendly to us. (W. H. P.'s note.)

He understands that his financial primacy is in danger and he will do his utmost to keep close to us.

There come dull and depressing ruts in this road that we now travel, and we are now in such a rut. Everybody who can leave London is gone. Most houses where one meets people who know things or who think they know are closed. Even the clubs are deserted. Members of the Government themselves—as many as can—try to find seclusion and a little rest in the country a few days in the week. Most of the diplomatic corps have gone to the country and come into town for office hours every day—an utter delusion unless they have babies in the family; and the only diplomatic family here that has babies is the Chinaman's. My house is as good a place as there is in England for me as long as this nightmare lasts—except, of course, every normal man hates a town. But this isn't a bad summer town. It isn't really hot, as you know; and there are golf links within fifteen minutes of my office. House be hanged! His kind solicitude for me is a case of benevolence badly wasted. But it is a dull and depressing period. The streets and parks are full of wounded soldiers. So is all England, for that matter. I saw them in every village I drove through in the Midlands last Saturday and Sunday. The price of good food goes higher and higher. Women make the hay in the fields, punch your ticket at the railway stations, and take your fare in the street cars in some cities. My shoemaker sent only yesterday a pair of shoes that I ordered nearly three months ago: "My men have gone to the war." The up-town part of the city is nearly deserted. Shops and residences are to let on almost every street. The newspapers have little but Russian defeats and assaults by Hoke Smith—two curious sources of sorrow! Poor old John Bull, he pathetically looks to the United States for sympathy, and he's "muddling through," conscious at last of the fact that he didn't get on to his big job anywhere near the beginning of it. But his strong point is—nothing "rattles" him and nobody can scare him—nor hurry him.

I cannot yet definitely find out the mistake that caused me to think that you thought it desirable for me to make a brief visit home for a consultation. There's no such thing as a vacation while this earthquake continues. Fortunately I don't need one. I am, as occasion permits, driving out now and then into the country for Saturday afternoons and Sundays: that gets a change of air; and I drop the war and all its brood of woes at the third hole on a golf-course.

Many thanks for your kind letter about the marriage of my daughter. I am very content with it, since such things must be. But it's nevertheless "devilish hard on the old man." That girl has been the charm of my household here, and (if the truth were known) her mother and I need her worse than her husband does. But they are very happily paired, and that's all we have a right to ask. We all heartily appreciate your kind thought of her happiness.

No sooner had I written this than the news comes of the sinking of the *Arabic!* About this there's no use writing since all the information will promptly go by telegraph. Nobody here is in the least surprised—surely I am not. Some such thing has been expected, and more will come. Berlin is utterly desperate and it will become more desperate. The elation of success in Russia brings desperation, and so will a reverse—such a German reverse, for example, as I am now told will probably take place within a month or two at the Dardanelles. I hear that the Turks are showing unmistakable signs of exhaustion—of ammunition and of fighting qualities. The German machine has its qualities and character, which no event has yet in the slightest degree changed. It has that incurable disease—the Napoleonic ambition.

Yours sincerely,
Walter H. Page.

II

What impression did these *Lusitania* telegrams and letters produce upon the statesman to whom they were addressed? This was a question that especially puzzled Page during this summer and autumn. In addition to the Ambassador's direct communications to the President, he wrote a large number of letters to Colonel House, already published in a preceding volume. These letters were written as much for President Wilson as for Colonel House. That the President's confidant would read them to his chief Page well knew; indeed they were written for that precise purpose. The more or less veiled fiction that they were addressed to a third person, gave Page great freedom in discussing the President's policies and the opinions which Great Britain and Europe held of his statesmanship. To all these letters and telegrams, however, both those sent directly and those indirectly through Colonel House, Page received no reply. He spent day after day and night after night writing letters and messages dealing with the crisis produced by Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare. Weeks and months went by, and not even an acknowledgment came from the White House. In the whole course of the war Page received only thirteen letters from Mr. Wilson. Several are extremely brief, introducing friends; others, also brief, concern merely routine matters. Only occasionally does the President make any reference to public questions, and not once does he discuss them in any detail. That President Wilson was a busy man may be taken for granted, and, to a certain degree, his failure to answer Page is explained by the great press of official business. That he was a somewhat inattentive correspondent is also no secret. Page was not the only Ambassador in a great post during the war whose confidences failed to inspire replies from the President. Yet that their contents had something to do with this Presidential indifference is probably the fact. In the early days Mr. Wilson greatly enjoyed Page's comments; as the divergence in views between the two men widened, however, his interest became less keen. Not infrequently Colonel House, visiting President Wilson after a month's or six weeks' absence from Washington, would find, among the Presidential papers, a package of Page's letters.

"Here are some letters from Page," the President would say, handing them to his adviser. "Perhaps you would like to read them."

Colonel House would take them away for perusal; occasionally he would give Mr. Wilson the gist of their contents, but not invariably. The Ambassador's views differed so from the President's own that the latter's interest was not great.

Of course, Page never knew how much or how little the President was interested. Yet the experience of writing letter after letter, with only silence at the other end, was discouraging and even disheartening. He regarded it as his duty, however, to make constant reports of what he saw and heard. Not unnaturally he pondered much over the President's failure to respond. "He often expressed his uneasiness to me," writes Mr. Irwin Laughlin, Counsellor of the Embassy and Page's closest official confidant, "and I always tried to reassure by impressing on him that it was his duty to write the truth as he saw it, and also by expressing my view that unless he were given an explicit indication that his letters were displeasing to the President there was no good ground for assuming the contrary merely because the President didn't answer them. He finally became so uneasy, however, that I suggested that, to relieve his mind, he put the question directly to Mr. Wilson. This he did. The President's answer relieved him greatly."

The letter to which Mr. Laughlin refers does not appear in the present file. The President, in his reply, informed Page that his letters were interesting and valuable and asked him to continue writing them.

He expressed his regret that the great pressure of public duties prevented him from writing more frequently; the whole tone, indeed, was amiable and friendly and cheered the Ambassador.

To the President

London, October 16, 1915.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

(1) I have heard to-day that the German Chancellor lately sent, by a neutral private messenger, a proposition to Sir Edward Grey looking towards peace, and one of the conditions that he laid down was that Great Britain should

pay an indemnity! I hear that Sir Edward's astonishment when he read that was such as not visibly to bring peace any nearer.

(2) I hear also—for the tenth time or more—that the differences in the Cabinet are on the verge of causing Mr. Asquith's resignation and the incoming of Lloyd George as Prime Minister.

I have every reason to believe that (1) is true; (2) may or may not be true. I hear the following story also which I know is true:

Several months ago the English caught a German spy and discovered his superior's address in Holland, the kind of invisible ink the spy used, etc. They have ever since made the spy write letters to his chief which they (the English Intelligence officers) dictate. When the answers come of course the Intelligence officers open them. In this way they keep up a useful correspondence with the German head-spy. Well, a little while ago they made their captive spy write to the Germans that the English and French were about to land a big army at Antwerp. It was judiciously whispered in the clubs that a great force was going to Antwerp. For two days the boats to Holland were stopped—the passenger-boats, I mean. Every man whispered to his neighbour, "Troops going to Antwerp, you know." The daily papers one morning contained a mysterious paragraph about an Allied army landing "somewhere." The Germans, of course, got the story, as it was meant they should, and they withdrew a considerable body of troops from France and rushed them to Antwerp. Then the English and the French made their big "drive"! I suppose the next time an Antwerp story is told, the Germans won't believe it and then an English army may really go.

I could fill a dozen pages with a crop of such stories gleaned almost any good day for gossip—most of them true—but what matter? The air is full of them, clean up to the moon. But most of them are gloomy, such, for example, as the report that the British have lost 100,000 in the Dardanelles and that the late "drive" in France cost the British between 50,000 and 75,000 men. When these facts are made public in Parliament, nobody knows what sort of a convulsion will follow. Perhaps then what is known as the Northcliffe-Lloyd George conspiracy may come to a head. Certainly the Government is in deep water. There are a dozen suppressed criticisms, any one of which might (and may) cause a change of Prime Ministers and perhaps other changes almost as important—the censorship, the Dardanelles crime, the Balkan situation, conscription, etc. Except for the encouragement given by the recent advance in France, every recent military event has deepened the gloom. True, Russia is coming back, but Italy is doing nothing; will she really help in the Balkans? The Germans *may* reach Constantinople—they won't, but many persons fear they will. If the English people knew of the slaughter of their armies in France and in the Dardanelles, they would rend the Government and accept peace on almost any terms—they wouldn't of course, but the Government seem to think they would.

In these gloomy times, you will not be surprised—you have not been surprised—that the German "come-down" in the *Arabic*[1] case provoked so little comment here; for the English have destroyed so many submarines that the

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[1] On September 1st, as a result of the torpedoing of the *Arabic*, Count Bernstorff handed Mr. Lansing a written pledge: "I beg to inform you that my instructions concerning our answer to your last *Lusitania* note contain the following passage: 'Liners will not be sunk by submarines without warning, and without ensuring the safety of the lives of non-combatants, provided that the liners do not try to escape or offer resistance.'"

Germans are, in that matter, at the end of their rope and they are using us to save their face. It's a moral certainty that the submarine which sunk the *Arabic* was itself sunk on that very day and there were no survivors. "Commander Schneider" is as dead as Rip Van Winkle's dog. But the English are interested in the *Lusitania* case. They say, "She was sunk nearly six months ago, and no satisfactory answer has yet been given about her—how long can the Germans keep the President waiting?" "Remember the *Lusitania*" was one of the most successful recruiting circulars during the early summer, and it has more than once been the battle-cry of attacking British forces in France. We shall not get credit in English opinion for a decisive diplomatic victory over Germany until the *Lusitania* case is satisfactorily closed. . . .

I see and feel in a hundred ways and am reminded by a hundred incidents of a considerable drifting apart of our people and the English—not unnatural at all, but in a degree delicate: I do not think dangerous. But it must be handled with care. Here they are on the border of a panic about the war—perhaps also on the verge of a political upheaval. The task is too great for their organization and they are not clever at organization as a rule, nor quick. All day every day we work with their difficulties and their sorrows—concrete cases of dead and wounded and prisoners; and we live in the atmosphere (for that matter, in the very area) of war. . . . In official life you hear a few ghastly and disquieting secrets, and every man there is worked to death. Sir Edward Grey hasn't slept more than a few hours for nearly a week. . . . On the outskirts of official life you hear of this impending change and that—that Sir Edward has failed and must go, that Lord Kitchener is a stuffed dummy, that Lloyd George, though a wind-bag, is the best man they have, and so on, *ad nauseam* and *ad infinitum.*

Out of this atmosphere I go to the Foreign Office to insist on the immediate release of a cargo of toys waiting in Rotterdam. I am patiently listened to; but the next day I learn (thro' the back door) that one of the Under-Secretaries, when he was told what I asked, remarked, "Last Christmas the Americans were giving us all, including the Germans, a ship-load of toys. Now they are quarrelling because they can't get a ship-load from Germany—odd Yankees, aren't they?" This afternoon's paper lectures us on our imbecility in trying to save the Armenians—or (as it puts it) in trying "by the most valiant use of words."—They are on the borderland of a panic. John Morley, who hadn't before been heard of since the war began, appeared in the House of Lords yesterday and asked questions that might cause half the Cabinet to fall, if they were to be pressed home with sufficient vigour. . . .

To descend to a much smaller aspect of the same subject, there is an indescribable strain on the nerves of all men here: nobody is built for this kind of thing. A few days ago a little group, chiefly of medical men but partly also of military men and civilians, gave a good-bye luncheon to the American physician who has for a year been at the head of the Red Cross American hospital in this kingdom. Apropos of nothing in particular, almost every man at the table began to weep. Osler wiped his eyes time and again, and the General who sat next me said in a weeping whisper: "I've got to get back to the War Office to my work—can't stand this sort of thing." . . .

Your faithful friend,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

London, December 31, 1915.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

My Christmas guess, of no particular value, but as good as anybody else's, is that the war will end next summer or autumn—sooner only if some decisive military event give the Germans a good excuse to make terms. We live in a censored world here—in a sort of fog; but there are too many signs of impending German disaster to doubt its coming: this in spite of the extraordinary series of bad failures by the Allies—the Dardanelles failure, the Balkan failure, two military failures in France when the German line was actually broken. These failures have singularly little effect on the English, whose slow stupidity one curses with the more vehemence and whose cool endurance one admires with the more confidence the more one sees of them. The upshot of it is they are invincible, but they bungle their work so that a victory is far, far more costly than it ought to be. They think that the all-around changes they have just made in their military commands are great improvements. I can form no opinion about that; but anybody can see that some sort of change was desirable.

There is great dissatisfaction, too, with the Government; but there's no way to change it except by the voluntary resignation of the Ministers. The Prime Minister will not resign (his wife said the other day that "nobody but God could put Herbert out"); and Sir Edward Grey's resignation will not be accepted by him. It is against these two that the fiercest criticism continues to beat—against Asquith because the war doesn't go forward fast enough and because he doesn't seem to deal frankly with the people, and against Grey for the diplomatic failure to secure the Balkan States to the Allies. But during those months the English were thinking chiefly of keeping the Germans out of Calais and of holding the German line in France till the Russians should threaten—Berlin! The story goes about now that the Turks offered to permit the British to go through the Dardanelles for the payment of a sum that is small in comparison with what the Dardanelles failure cost. The answer they got was that the English do not do things in that way. The Navy and Army regard Sir Edward Grey, who is supposed to be responsible for this answer, as a visionary statesman—"too much of a gentleman," as old Lord Fisher said of Mr. Balfour.

Of course, we who are onlookers here have long ago passed the place where we can be surprised by any event; but unless new and disastrous things happen in the Balkans or beyond, I have good hope that Sir Edward will not be driven out of office till the war end. He will then go because his eyes demand rest. Else he may go blind. I lay stress on this because his continuing in office is of prime importance to us. He sees more nearly eye-to-eye with us than (I think) any other member of the Cabinet. He has to yield to his associates, who reflect and represent British opinion about the uses of sea power; and especially does he have to yield to the military and naval group and to the lawyer group. But he has softened many a blow. The diplomatic corps here share my estimate of him. Within the last few days Allied and neutral diplomats alike have expressed to me the greatest alarm lest he should resign in disgust at the criticism of him which comes from half the points of the compass. I don't think the diplomats now in service command great weight or brains. I fear that one has a tendency to lessen his list of great men as he sees them at close range. But, as nearly as I can judge, the group in London make a higher average by a good deal than the group at any other capital. Imperiali, the Italian Ambassador, dined with me three nights ago, and I could get him to talk about nothing else than Sir Edward. Merry del Val, the Spaniard, gave me a call lasting a whole working morning, to express his alarm. The Minister from X . . . danced all around the room muttering his fear, "God knows we have a hard enough time now. But with Curzon, who can tell what we should suffer?" And it's Curzon they talk about for the Foreign Office if a change should be made.

Those of us who have so far fought thro' this war have long ago got past the least trace of awe of noble lords, or vice-gerents, or royalty; but you don't want—for steady intercourse—to deal with a fellow who has an air of ordering all mundane things; you're afraid you'll be tempted some day to say what you think of him, which wouldn't be diplomatic. In India Curzon quarrelled with Kitchener—which I secretly hold to his credit. For nobody seems able to work with Kitchener. For twenty years he ordered savages and dependent nations about. The people believe him great and the Government used him most effectively. His name raised a great army, Lord Derby actually doing the work. Thus, you see, we live not in an ordered world, but in a world of ragged hopes and fears. I fancy that History, in one of her vagaries, will set down these plausibilities for facts—that Asquith was England's greatest Prime Minister and that Grey failed in the great war as Secretary for Foreign Affairs—both wide of the truth.

I've heard nothing lately about the British reply to our long Note. I know they are looking up facts for a reply, and I'll ask when I see Sir Edward next—in a day or two.

But I think I have written you that I do not expect any important concession to our demands. The navy party has public opinion squarely behind it; they are going to do all they can to starve out Germany and settle the bill with neutrals after the war. There isn't much feeling against us on the score of our protests against British action. Feeling flares up when provoked by any event; but nobody has time or feelings to spare from the demands of the war. Then, too, so long as the *Lusitania* controversy is unsettled, our Notes and protests are regarded by the public—I will not say by the Government—as formal. Austria is no longer thought of by the British as an independent power—only a German satrapy, like Turkey or Bulgaria. Consequently, the English conception of the *Ancona*[1] controversy is that it is an incident. Only Germany is regarded as a real power here. Any Englishman who speaks quite frankly will say something like this: "We caught and destroyed between seventy and eighty German submarines so that their activity off the English and Irish coast had to be discontinued. The American controversy gave them a convenient way to 'come-down.' Rather than confess an English victory they pretended to give in to the American Government. Of course the American Government had to accept their come-down; but of course also it wasn't worth the breath it took to utter it. The real test is the *Lusitania:* will they disavow that?"

Such is the public feeling here as the year ends. Men take only a languid interest in anything but the war. The eternal wrangle about the Government's inefficiency goes on all the time. You may look out the window anywhere at any time of day and see recruits drilling in the streets and convalescent wounded taking an outing. God knows how many hospitals there are in London and all over the kingdom or how many maimed lie in them. On Christmas day I saw 1,000 in one hospital—cheerful fellows in the main, singing Christmas songs.

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[1] The *Ancona* was sunk by an Austrian submarine in the Mediterranean, November 7, 1915. American lives were lost.

Meantime at the Embassy we have a very full day's work every day—now fortunately routine business in the main, but an enormous volume of it. The Government is as courteous as ever; but everybody in the Government is worked to death. A dense cloud of weariness hangs over all London. Every day or two some man breaks down and has to go off or to give up. Administrative work has its casualties. There are no idle people here—men or women—of any class. Nobody reads a book. The newspapers are meagre. The theatres have mere diversions—"funny shows" chiefly. Social activity is reduced to a minimum. *Punch* is unutterably dull. Thank Heaven for sleep! and a London winter is foggy and heavy-eyed.

At this place in my letter I had an interesting interruption. Harold Fowler, the young fellow whom I brought over with me as my private secretary, resigned a year ago and went into the English Army. He has been in France for six months—for the last three months in command of a three-inch sniping gun just back of the trenches. He is as much of a real man as any young fellow I have ever known. I made him a member of my family and he lived with me. Having ten days' leave, he is in London. He came into my library just at the end of the last page; and I've found out more from him than from a dozen or two high officers back from the front. The Englishman has remarkable endurance. He has no nerves. Cornered he will fight as a tiger. He doesn't mind dying and he dies heroic-ally. He loses twice as many men on every move as he need lose. Man for man, he is worth five Germans—alone. In an army every German is worth five Englishmen. This sort of fighting, therefore, *can* be carried on for years and years. Fowler sometimes thinks it may. Both sides lack initiative. Both sides have Old World faults. The Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians (being Englishmen set free) are by far the best soldiers in this war. This American youth is like them. When he was appointed on the Colonel's staff, he begged and begged to command a gun till he got it. He's there to do the effective work—not for safety. There's little chance, I fear, that he will come out whole—or come out at all. When he goes, he'll be gone forever.[1] Kipling said, when his boy went off: "I'll never see him again," and now he's dead.

This estimate of the English by Fowler is startlingly accurate. They lack knack. Else, they'd end the job quickly. They lack knack at all *new* tasks. That's the trouble with their government in war time. They manage their finances and their navy incomparably—two tasks they've done for centuries—continuously done. I came near writing that they muddle everything else: I think they do.

A very well-informed Dane from Copenhagen—an Under Secretary in one department of his government—told me last night after dinner and cigars, that he often fears that the English will drive the Danes into the war on the German side by their stupidity about preventing Danish trade—in spite of the fact that every three Danes out of four are pro-British. I am told his judgment may be twisted by the trade troubles that he has to handle.

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[1] This prophecy was happily not fulfilled; Mr. Fowler came out of the war in good condition.

But he said that he knew the Germans were building twenty-four gigantic submarines. When they are ready they will come out for ships to and from the United States much farther out at sea than the scene of the *Lusitania* and *Arabic* attacks and consequently farther from danger of British attack.[1]

Well, my poor letter is dwindling down to mere gossip, and it's the dullest week of the year in London. Let me add my most hearty good wishes to you and Mrs. Wilson for the New Year and for all New Years. We keep in our trenches here with good spirits and unwearying efforts; and contrary to the predictions of wiser men, I still hope that the war will end in 1916. Yet I confess I fear the wiser men who say 1917 or 1918 may guess better than I.

Sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

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[1] Just as I am about to seal this, private information comes from Liverpool that German submarines have sunk several British ships in the Irish Sea during the past week. (W. H. P.'s note.)

CHAPTER X

PAGE AND THE "HOUSE MEMORANDUM"

I

IN THE early part of January, 1916, Colonel House arrived in London. Nothing was said publicly about the purpose of the visit, but that purpose was hardly concealed. President Wilson was renewing his efforts to end the war. The whole proceeding caused Page the greatest misgiving. By this time the Ambassador had lost faith in the wisdom of President Wilson's leadership. He had tried to see the President's point of view, to sympathize with his attempts to solve the *Lusitania* crisis without involving the country in war, and to believe that back of what Page regarded as Mr. Wilson's inadequacy and indecision there lay a wise and far-reaching policy. Now, however, the facts proved too strong for Page. As he passed in review the events of eighteen months, the aspect that chiefly appalled him was Mr. Wilson's apparent disposition to deal gently with the Germans. Page did not necessarily regard the President as pro-German, yet the anti-British note which, the Ambassador believed, he could always feel in American foreign policy, caused him the deepest anxiety. In practically every question since 1914 the inevitable effect of the American attitude was to make things easier for Germany and more difficult for Great Britain. This was the case with the Declaration of London, with the *Dacia*, and the correspondence about the blockade, and with the failure to adopt a vigorous course in the *Lusitania* crisis and the submarine campaign.

Meanwhile other happenings had added to Page's dissatisfaction with the Administration. The long drawn-out argument over the *Lusitania* seemed to be approaching its end; Bernstorff and Mr. Lansing had apparently hit upon some plan for settling that question; just what the plan was no one knew, but that it did not comprise a disavowal by Germany and an admission of guilt was no secret. Such a settlement, Page believed, would only add to the humiliation of the United States; moreover, he did not think that even in the reparation Germany was then discussing, as a matter of grace rather than as a matter of justice, her motives were at all sincere; one object, perhaps the compelling one, was to end an inconvenient quarrel with the United States, in the expectation that Mr. Wilson, having extracted these concessions from Germany, would concentrate all his energies on his disputes with Great Britain. The great German goal, as ever, was to use the United States to end the blockade. The uninterrupted transmission of essential war supplies from American to neutral ports, whence they could quickly be sent to Germany, was becoming more and more essential to German success. The hope of attaining this purpose, or, failing that, to cause a breach between Great Britain and the United States, was, as Page regarded the pending *Lusitania* negotiations, the real purpose of the unsatisfactory concessions which Germany was evidently prepared to make.

Another incident—an incident which only a few persons then knew anything about and which is made public for the first time in this Presidential correspondence—was always present in Page's mind, and did more perhaps than even the *Lusitania* controversy to break down his confidence in the Wilson administration. In the latter part of September, 1915, Mr. Alexander C. Kirk, Secretary at the American Embassy in Berlin, appeared in London and immediately reported to Mr. Irwin Laughlin. Mr. Kirk's story was of such an unprecedented character that Mr. Laughlin at once conducted him to the Ambassador. He was the bearer of a parcel of documents which Mr. James W. Gerard, American Ambassador at Berlin, regarded as so important and so dangerous that he would not take the risk of making any telegraphic or written communication concerning them. Hence he had dispatched them to Page by one of his own secretaries. Page examined the documents, and immediately sent the following telegram to Washington:

To the Secretary of State

London, September 25, 1915.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
2855, September 25, 2 P. M.
Confidential for the Secretary.

Referring to package of papers forwarded in department pouch to Berlin which you instructed Gerard to return to you personally, I transmit the following telegram, written by Kirk, Third Secretary of Berlin Embassy, who has come here under Gerard's oral instructions to send it, as it could not safely be dispatched from Berlin. Kirk remains here pending your instructions. Papers are in my safe.

"Package in question which has been placed with other official notes pending receipt of instructions from the Department, was inadvertently opened by Mr. Gerard himself and as importance of contents was instantly perceived, all papers were examined. Package found to contain statements in duplicate of accounts of German Embassy in Washington together with supporting vouchers in the original or certified copy. Vouchers show that $5,000 was paid to Archibald for propaganda, $4,500 to Marcus Braun, editor of *Fair Play*, $3,000 to Miss Ray Beveridge for a lecture tour, and $1,000 to Edwin Emerson for travelling expenses. In addition statements from the Western Union Telegraph-Cable Company contain names of persons in the United States and elsewhere to whom messages were sent by the German Embassy, as well as purpose of message, whether propaganda or official business. These statements show also the bill for cables to Bogotâ from April first to the tenth amounted to over four thousand dollars and to Guatemala three thousand and to Shanghai two thousand. Large sums spent in cables to Mexico City, Manila, Honolulu, Haiti, and Buenos Aires in that paper appear to furnish authentic list of all kinds of German agents in the United States and elsewhere and also indicate extent and direction of German propaganda.

"In this connection, Mr. Gerard considers that Department would be justified in examining papers in question, especially in view of the fact that since beginning of war, American Embassy in Berlin has found it necessary to direct seventeen notes to the German Foreign Office protesting against opening of mail addressed to the Ambassador. These protests have, for most part, been ignored, while in the single case where a letter to another Chief of Mission in Berlin was opened, an official apology was made before protest was lodged.

"Mr. Gerard, in accordance with his custom in opening correspondence, did not tear envelopes or break seals of this parcel but detached bottom flap of envelope without it.

"In view of nature of documents it did not seem advisable to photograph them in Berlin or entrust them to regular courier."

American Ambassador,
London.

The documents which Mr. Kirk had brought from Mr. Gerard in Berlin to Page were the records of Count Bernstorff, German Ambassador to the United States, containing the financial details of his propaganda activities in the United States and other countries. They showed his disbursement of $5,000 to J. F. J. Archibald, the American journalist in German and Austrian pay, whose papers, recently intercepted and published by the British, had caused the dismissal of Doctor Dumba as Austrian Ambassador to the United States. They disclosed Bernstorff's payments to many other persons engaged, in the United States and elsewhere, in spreading German propaganda; indeed, they gave a complete picture of Bernstorff using his ambassadorial post at Washington as a headquarters for conducting a lively campaign, throughout the world, in favour of German purposes and in hostility to the United States. Practically all the agents mentioned by Count Bernstorff had been attacking American war-time policy, in some instances personally assailing President Wilson; here was the proof, in the form of official German documents, that the German Ambassador had been financing these attacks; here, indeed, were Count Bernstorff's records of his disbursements for that purpose. More extraordinary still, it appeared that Mr. Gerard had uncovered these incriminating papers in the American diplomatic pouch, sent from the State Department to Berlin. In what manner had all this evidence found its way into so inappropriate a habitat? One would have concluded that fate had played a sorry trick on Bernstorff in placing the facts that were more than sufficient to destroy his diplomatic career in the one place where they could do him the most harm, and that correspondingly it had done the American Government a great kindness in thus delivering its enemy into its hands.

Subsequent events disclosed, however, that fortune had had nothing to do with this transaction. The man who had entrusted these confidential documents to the American diplomatic pouch was none other than Count Bernstorff himself. One day in early September, probably about the time that popular excitement over the Dumba disclosure was most keen, Ambassador Bernstorff called at the State Department. He had a package, the German Ambassador said, which he wished to forward to Germany in the Department's official mail bag. Would the Department consent to send it? Count Bernstorff treated the matter as unimportant, and gave the impression that the papers in question concerned trifling and routine administrative details. Permission having been obtained, he delivered a sealed envelope, which was put in the Department's pouch and in due course reached Mr. Gerard. Mr. Gerard opened it, in the somewhat ingenious manner Mr. Kirk describes in his message. Even though Mr. Gerard had observed that it was addressed to the German Foreign Minister, he would have had every right to investigate; for it came in the American pouch, and an Ambassador is entitled to know what documents he has been asked to transmit. The resultant "find," however, astonished and shocked Mr. Gerard. Obviously he could not deliver the papers to their appointed destination; the information in them was something that his government was entitled to receive; the only course was to return them to Washington. But he could not send such dangerous papers from Berlin; the risk of discovery was too great. This is the reason that he very judiciously dispatched them, by the hand of a trusted courier, to Page for transmission to Mr. Lansing.

Page at once sent the papers to the State Department. They were immediately forwarded again to Mr. Gerard, with instructions to hand them to the German Foreign Secretary.

Page refers to this proceeding several times in his letters. It really preyed upon his mind. That the State Department had obtained first-hand evidence disclosing Bernstorff's subversive activities in the United States, and still failed to demand the Ambassador's recall, was only one aspect that shocked him. Above all was his humiliating discovery of the contempt and cynicism with which the German Ambassador treated the Administration. Bernstorff evidently regarded the State Department with so little seriousness that he used it for transmitting his most secret papers,—and papers that betrayed his plottings against the country whose hospitality he enjoyed. In Page's view the act of Mr. Lansing—and presumably of the President—in persisting in sending these documents to the German Government, after Page, in accordance with Mr. Gerard's request, had sent them to Washington, simply showed that they were prepared to resort to all means, even to the suppression of evidence, in their determination to avoid a rupture with Germany. Coming after a long course of similar happenings, it destroyed any remaining confidence Page may have had in Mr. Wilson's desire to protect American interest and honour, and henceforth it influenced all his thinking and writing about the President. In part it accounts for the tone of the memorandum which he wrote about Colonel House's visit to London in January, 1916:

Events crowd one another.

Lunch to-day: Sir Edward Grey, Lord Robert Cecil, House, Laughlin, and I. House said: "The United States would like Great Britain to do whatever would help the United States to aid the Allies," and he said that this is the way the President feels. Much talk along the same line. House made it plain, however, that if the President openly came out for the Allies, he could not command the public sentiment of the country. This (as matters stand to-day with Congress in session) is no doubt literally true. But it raises a deeper question. That is to say, public sentiment is now neutral and to a great degree not interested in the war. But is not this the result of the President's own work in preaching the duty of personal neutrality? Suppose the President had contented himself with declaring the neutrality of the Government, with seeing to it that the Government was really neutral, but had refrained, in his several speeches and in his Messages, from exhorting the people to a strict personal neutrality—suppose he had refrained from labouring our detachment and our unconcern—wouldn't there have been a better general understanding of the war and a stronger and more general natural feeling for the Allies than there now is? This is a point of much importance. Hasn't the President done all he could to *make* the people detached? Then, after that event, isn't House using their detachment as an explanation of his detached conduct? There has somewhere in this business been a lack of such leadership as the President showed about the domestic issues of the early part of his Administration.

The President to-day sends House a telegram to the effect that the German submarine controversy being laid, all the pressure of criticism will be made on Great Britain —a certain fierce, blue-bellied Presbyterian tone in it.

And the *Lusitania* and all the other submarine troubles do seem composed—to the point of American acceptance at least. The Germans stoop to conquer. Bernstorff is hailed as a sort of hero, who has brought his own government to meet the American demands. The text of the German answer and pledge has not yet been made public—it has gone to Berlin for ratification. But there's no doubt about a "settlement" having been reached. There is an insincerity about it because it has been reached only in order to begin an attack on Great Britain. In other words, our government is used by Bernstorff as a tool against Great Britain. In the last analysis, this is beyond all question. There's bound at some time to be a rebound from this position: it isn't sincere on the part of the Germans and it isn't quite satisfying to American pride and to the American conscience.

A lack of leadership, for instance, crops out in this "profound secret" which House tells me. Gerard some time ago had a long conversation with the Kaiser. He wrote to the President that he was not at liberty to repeat the Kaiser's remarks! But he enclosed in his letter a cryptic sentence on a separate sheet which said that "after this war, I will give attention to the United States"[1] —how instead of commanding Gerard to report what the Emperor said, the President asks House to go to Berlin and find out!—and find out whether he meant this as a threat. Now if there hadn't been a mortal dread of war and therefore a mortal dread of Germany, such a procedure would not have been adopted.

The facts strongly implied and morally proved, if not technically proved, by the "accounts"—i. e., financial papers—which Lansing permitted Bernstorff to send to

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[1] Ambassador Gerard tells of this famous interview in his book, "My Four Years in Germany," Chapter XII, p. 252.

Berlin in our pouch (and which Gerard sent all the way back to Washington and which Lansing again sent to Berlin in our pouch)—these facts were a strong enough conviction of Bernstorff to warrant his dismissal. But they have been pigeon-holed. Now, Von Papen, the dismissed German military attaché, while on his way home was searched at Falmouth, and his checks and check books were taken from him.

From London Colonel House went to Paris and Berlin. He returned to London in February with a definite scheme for obtaining peace. What this plan was and the opinion of it entertained by the Ambassador appear in the following memorandum.

Memorandum, dated February 9, 1916

House arrived from Berlin—Paris—Havre (the King of the Belgians) full of the idea of American intervention. First his plan was that he and I and a group of the British Cabinet (Grey, Asquith, Lloyd George, Reading, etc.) should at once work out a minimum programme of peace—the least that the Allies would accept, which, he assumed, would be unacceptable to the Germans; and that the President would take this programme and present it to both sides; the side that declined would be responsible for continuing the war. Then, to end the war, the President would help the other side—that is, the Allies. House had talked more or less with some members of the French Government, who, he said, were enthusiastic about it. I wonder if they understood what he said, or whether he understood what they said? Then, too, the King of the Belgians approved it. Of course, the fatal moral weakness of the foregoing scheme is that we should plunge into the war, not on the merits of the cause, but by a carefully sprung trick. When I said that the way to get into the war was for a proper cause—to decline to be hoodwinked about the *Lusitania* or (or and) to send Bernstorff home because he gave money to Von Papen which went to bomb-throwers, etc., etc.—of which the Department of State has documentary evidence—*this* is the way to get into the war—then House objected that we must do it the President's own way. Of course such an indirect scheme is doomed to failure—is wrong, in fact.

Of course, too, as I told House, nobody here would dare talk about peace, and that, if they *did* dare, nobody would dare accept the President's "intervention." They no longer have confidence in the President.

The next day (Thursday, February 10th) House told me that the better plan would be simply to have the President invite both sides to hold a conference and let them work it out themselves—as if they would now confer!

House told me that we'd have a meeting on Monday—Asquith, Grey, Reading, Lloyd George, he, and I. No, we won't. No member of the Government can afford to discuss any such subject; not one of them has any confidence in the strength of the President for action.

Therefore on Friday, 11 February, I told House that I couldn't go with him to any such conference, and I wouldn't.

He didn't seem surprised; for (I think) he had discovered that such a conference was either impossible or dangerous. He confessed that he was "uneasy on every account."

This memorandum gives only a faint conception of Page's mood at that time. In his discussion with Englishmen, and even with the members of his own staff, he maintained a strict diplomatic reserve; it was characteristic of his frank nature, however, that, in setting forth his views with the President's personal representative, he should not mince matters to the slightest degree. The fact is that recent events had completely exhausted his patience. The contempt shown by Bernstorff for the United States, and the failure of the President to resent this contempt, was a sore wound to Page's proud American soul. What he looked upon as the indirection of this latest peace proposal also stirred him deeply. Blessed by Heaven with great facility of speech—sometimes almost to a disconcerting extent—he now unburdened himself in a quarter where his outspokenness at least could not subject him to the charge of deceit—to President Wilson's closest personal confidant. Page spent one whole evening with Colonel House discussing the President's war policy, taking it up point by point from the day the Germans invaded Belgium. Striding up and down his room, speaking with the rapidity that marked his utterance in his intense and excited moments, Page on this memorable evening characterized each step in the Wilsonian war programme. From the beginning, the whole thing seemed to him a gigantic calamity. The criticisms Page had been writing Colonel House and the President he now repeated in the most expressive language. He could find only one episode in American history which compared with Wilson's behaviour in the war. Page had been a student of Jefferson from his boyhood; his favourite ideas on social organization he had obtained from his favourite philosopher of democracy; in certain aspects Jefferson had been the inspiration of his life. But his admiration for the great Virginian was not one-sided; it was discriminating to a degree. There was one chapter in

Jefferson's career, which above all others, Page had never respected. Jefferson's attitude toward Great Britain and France in the time of the Napoleonic wars he had always regarded as a blemish on a great career. The quiet acceptance of repeated insults, the refusal to act on the sinkings and captures of American ships and the impressment of American seamen, the failure to realize the inevitability of war, the stubborn neglect to make preparation for hostilities—these derelictions Page had always regarded as seriously detracting from Jefferson's character as a statesman. And now Page pictured President Wilson's attitude toward this great European war as almost a perfect parallel to Jefferson in his weakest period. Far worse, indeed, for Jefferson's laxity was explained in large part by the weakness of the infant nation in the early 19th Century, while Wilson had at his back a giant country, infinitely rich in resources, in wealth, in leadership, and in men. It is a pity that no stenographic report of Page's conversation of that evening exists, for it would be an historic document of great importance. The Plutarchian parallel between Jefferson and Wilson, faced with such a similar set of circumstances, would be a literary treasure of high order. Page's vividness and intensity usually increased as the discussion proceeded, and on this occasion, as his interest in the subject grew, the energy of his language became more marked. As a climax, Page could find only one word that adequately expressed the American war policy since the *Lusitania;* that policy was, he declared, the policy of "cowardice." It was Jefferson all over again!

Page was just as outspoken about the plan now afoot for peace.

"If the British public learns that this is going on," he said to Colonel House, half seriously, half goodnaturedly, "you will be lucky if you are not thrown into the Thames." He declined to have anything to do with the plan or to attend any meeting at which it was to be discussed.

At first Page's opposition to this proposal may appear strange, for it had many points of resemblance with the same plan he had suggested in a letter to the President on October 6, 1914.[1] There was one way, he wrote at that time, in which the United States could bring the war to an end. Mr. Wilson should announce the terms of a satisfactory peace—such as disarmament and a Belgian indemnity. At that time Great Britain and France would gladly have accepted some such basis of settlement. Page believed that the United States should accompany this proposal with the declaration that if Germany refused then the resources of this country would be cast on the side of the Allies. So far as the record shows, this suggestion made no impression on President Wilson, but the programme now brought forth by Colonel House was much like Page's rejected scheme of fifteen months before. In essence, the new proposal was to present Germany certain terms of peace; if Germany rejected them, the United States would intervene in the war on the side of the Allies. The fact that fifteen months had passed, however, Page regarded as having completely changed the European problem. In October, 1914, the United States had no reason for taking part in the war except the general grounds of humanity and justice and, in a long survey, its regard for its own national future and safety. The American Republic at that time had no quarrel with Germany and no specific grievance of its own against that nation. By January, 1916, however, we had suffered a series of outrages almost unparalleled in history. We had our own honour, our own interests, our own position in the world to maintain. If we were going to war, Page believed, we should go to war in the first place to maintain that dignity and honour; the self-respect of the nation demanded straightforward action, not a roundabout approach to the great subject.

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[1] See ante, page 157.

Page felt so deeply that, as he records, he refused to attend the dinner at which the proposal was to be discussed. The meeting nevertheless was held at the house of Lord Reading, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer. Page was entirely right about the prevailing attitude of the British popular mind toward peace. Emotion ran so high in London that it was necessary to observe the utmost secrecy. "If it were known that we were meeting for the purpose of discussing peace," remarked Sir Edward Grey to Colonel House, "every window in my house would be smashed." It is only recently indeed that the world has learned that, in February, 1916, the foremost leaders of the British Empire, Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, Mr. Lloyd George, and Lord Reading quietly met one evening with Colonel House to consider a plan that had two alternatives: either a peace fairly satisfactory to the Allies or the entrance into the war of the United States on their side. It was proposed to offer Germany a choice that was essentially an ultimatum: accept this settlement of the war, or accept America as an enemy in arms! This plan is the one embodied in a document that promises to become historic as the "House Memorandum." Lord Grey has made it public for the first time in his book, "Twenty-five Years." The paper, as Lord Grey publishes it, was the joint production of himself and Colonel House. It is significantly dated on Washington's birthday, 1916.

Memorandum

(Confidential)

Colonel House told me that President Wilson was ready, on hearing from France and England, to propose that a conference should be summoned to put an end to the war. Should the Allies accept this proposal, and should Germany refuse it, the United States would probably enter the war against Germany.

Colonel House expressed the opinion that, if such a conference met, it would secure peace on terms not unfavourable to the Allies; and if it failed to secure peace, the United States would leave the Conference as a belligerent on the side of the Allies, if Germany was unreasonable. Colonel House expressed an opinion decidedly favourable to the restoration of Belgium, the transfer of Alsace and Lorraine to France, and the acquisition by Russia of an outlet to the sea, though he thought that the lost territory incurred by Germany in one place would have to be compensated to her by concessions to her in other places outside Europe. If the Allies delayed accepting the offer of President Wilson, and if, later on, the course of the war was so unfavourable to them that the intervention of the United States would not be effective, the United States would probably disinterest themselves in Europe and look to their protection in their own way.

I said that I felt the statement, coming from the President of the United States, to be a matter of such importance that I must inform the Prime Minister and my colleagues; but that I could say nothing until it had received their consideration. The British Government could, under no circumstances, accept or make any proposal except in consultation and agreement with the

Allies. I thought that the Cabinet would probably feel that the present situation would not justify them in approaching their allies on this subject at the present moment; but, as Colonel House had an intimate conversation with M. Briand and M. Jules Cambon in Paris, I should think it right to tell M. Briand privately, through the French Ambassador in London, what Colonel House had said to us; and I should, of course, whenever there was an opportunity, be ready to talk the matter over with M. Briand, if he desired it.[1]

E. G.

The reference to M. Briand concerns an important meeting between that French statesman, then Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Colonel House, in the course of the American's recent visit to Paris. At that time Colonel House informed the French Premier that the United States had no intention of standing aside if it became apparent that abstention from war would result in a German victory. This conversation was really a commitment by the United States to France of an unprecedented kind. The United States wished to be informed if, and when, our military assistance was needed to prevent the triumph of Germany. Any time the French Government would notify Washington that our aid was indispensable, then this aid would be forthcoming. The only condition President Wilson demanded was that he receive this notification in time to make American assistance decisive. If word came at too late a date to give this country any chance of aiding effectively, then we could not regard it. In other words, the United States wished to enter a going concern, not a bankrupt one. The proposal amounted to a demand that France, in case she was able to see her approaching destruction far enough ahead, should, so to speak, sound the tocsin, in which case this country would hasten to her assistance. The French Republic never sent Washington such a message.

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[1] "Twenty-five Years," by Viscount Grey of Fallodon; Vol. II, pages 127-128.

Of the several statesmen present at this meeting at Lord Reading's house, Grey was the only one who positively endorsed the proposal embodied in the "House Memorandum." On the other hand, not one spoke against it, and the sentiment, on the whole, was rather favourable. All expressed an opinion except Lord Reading, who merely sat and listened. Lloyd George talked much and laid the utmost emphasis upon the influence of Wilson. The world situation, he declared, lay in the President's hands; he could make peace at any time and practically dictate the terms of settlement. Asquith's attitude was non-committal although he displayed no hostility to the plan.

In the interest of strict historic accuracy, however, it must be pointed out that the proposal so secretly discussed that evening was not identically the one which is printed in the memoirs of Lord Grey. This text contains an important word that did not appear in the original version. The document, as drawn by Colonel House and the Foreign Secretary, was taken to Washington by Colonel House and laid before the President. The President, Lord Grey relates, approved it and sent it back to London with only one change. Lord Grey does not disclose just what the change made by President Wilson was, but it may be revealed in this place. As the paper came to the President the last sentence of the first paragraph ran thus: "Should the Allies accept this proposal, and should Germany refuse it, the United States would enter the war against Germany." This phrasing, of course, made the document an absolute commitment by the United States. Between the words "would" and "enter" the President now inserted the word "probably"; so that the important phrase read, "The United States would *probably* enter the war."

It is not likely that Page ever saw this memorandum, either before or after it had been subjected to Presidential revision; as his own memorandum shows, however, he was acquainted with its substance and strongly disapproved. Opinions may differ as to his judgment, but on one point at least he was right—the plan proved utterly futile. In Page's mind, this scheme simply amounted to trifling with a subject of the most momentous consequence. The unfortunate fact is that Page had no longer any confidence in President Wilson. Had he seen the memorandum, after the President had inserted a word that changed the whole document from a definite pledge to a conditional one—one that still, after the preliminary steps had been taken, left the President free to retreat before the irrevocable step—Page would unquestionably have regarded that change as merely confirming his lack of faith. He would have looked upon it as another instance of that indecision, that inability to do anything positive which, in his opinion, had marked the President's course from the first. There were other reasons why the Ambassador would have looked on this outline of peace as an inadequate programme. The European situation, the Ambassador well understood, made impracticable any attempt to end the war on this basis. The "House Memorandum" did not sufficiently regard the complexities of European politics. Great Britain was not the only Allied power; in particular there was France. Lord Grey relates that the substance of this document was communicated to France through the French Ambassador in London, but that France ignored it. That the proposal would be unwelcome to Frenchmen may be assumed. This memorandum did not contemplate the complete defeat of Germany; its acceptance would have been a humiliation for the Fatherland, it is true, for the cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France and of Constantinople to Russia would have seemed something almost inconceivable in face of the existing military strength of Germany. Still, peace on these terms would not have represented the final triumph that France regarded as essential to her safety as a nation. The very existence of their country, Frenchmen believed, depended on the destruction of Germany as a military power. France had succeeded in consolidating Great Britain, Italy, and Russia as Allies in this war. French statesmen believed that this was something they would never be able to do again. They were therefore convinced that if they could not utterly defeat Germany this time, they could never accomplish it; on the other hand, unless they did defeat Germany, they believed that France as an independent nation had come to its end. Any halfway measures with Germany, even though they represented great German concessions, would merely postpone for a short time the collapse of their country. The American proposal for ending the war did not aim at any such unquestioned destruction of German military power. It left intact the German Army, the German Navy, the German industrial and military machine. Peace on these terms would mean that Germany would be able to recuperate her forces and economic strength, and in the course of ten or fifteen years, or perhaps earlier, start the war again. In the beginning Page had insisted, as had most observers, that any peace which left the way open to a resumption of the conflict in any appreciable time, would be worse than the continuation of the existing war. President Wilson's new proposal did not guarantee France from a renewal of the attack. And when this second attack came would Great Britain, Italy, and Russia take the field as her allies? French statesmen had no confidence that such an alliance could be reformed. They therefore pictured themselves, a decade or so hence, again assailed by the Central Empires—France this time standing alone, without great allies; they knew they would be defeated and that France would go down in ruin. This is the reason why France could not accept any terms of peace which did not mean the end of German military power. She would rather take the chance of being defeated in this war than accept such a peace, because she knew that in ten years or fifteen years it was probable that she would be destroyed. Frenchmen regarded French salvation as dependent upon a continuation of this struggle, even under the discouraging conditions that prevailed in February, 1916, because they might still get the United States in and thereby win the victory which would eliminate Germany as a danger. This was the reason that the House Memorandum was ignored by France.

The situation of Great Britain, however, was quite different. Britain's future did not depend upon the annihilation of the German Army; she still had her great fleet and her dominions and therefore was secure from any fear of destruction. Moreover, a large part of the thinking British public did not look with any particular satisfaction upon a victorious Russia; in their view a peace that would leave Russia in a weak position would be better for Great Britain than one which would leave the Tsar as a military menace to the British Empire. For these reasons the terms of peace proposed by Colonel House, which amounted to a victory over Germany—

though not an overwhelming one—would have been fairly satisfactory. Yet the behaviour of the British Foreign Office toward France was entirely honourable. For the very reason that a knockout was necessary for French security but not for British, the British statesmen could not be urgent in asking France to accept this document as a basis for bringing the war to an end. This is the explanation for Grey's action in merely transmitting the suggestion to France, making no recommendation when he did so, and, when France ignored it, the plan naturally expired.

II

Embassy of the United States of America,
12 May, 1916, London.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The message that you were kind enough to telegraph about Shakespeare[1] was enthusiastically received at the Mansion House meeting, whereat men representing most countries (other than the German, of course) paid their countries' tribute to the poet; and I have had many persons speak to me since about it. It added just the right American touch to a notable meeting.

A word about Colonel Squier, for four years our military attaché here, whom the War Department has just called home for service in the Department. Squier, a West Point man, is also a Ph. D. of Johns Hopkins—in Physics. He was under Rowland. He made a great place for himself here. I think he belongs to more learned scientific societies in England than any other American. He is one of our most distinguished physicists, and his inventions in telegraphy—with especial reference to cables and cable service—have brought him the friendship of all the great scientific men in the kingdom. The British Government is now using an invention of his which doubles the service of every cable it has. Characteristically Squier simply made them a present of it till the war ends. He has, therefore, added real distinction to this Embassy—in a most unusual way. Besides, he seems to be as good a military man as he is a scientific investigator. The army men here hold him in the greatest esteem. He has Kitchener's frank confidence. He was the guest for weeks of the British Headquarters in France. The reports that he has prepared for our War Department and the War College, will, I am told, be the textbooks on military subjects hereafter. A British General asked me the other day, apropos of Squier's going home, why such a man in our army was not promoted. "Squier a mere Lieutenant Colonel! If we had him, we'd make him a Brigadier General, a Lieutenant General, a General, or a Field Marshall." I take the liberty to suggest that you send for him. He can tell you more about the military situation than any other man I know. By the way, his permanent successor here ought not to be a man of lower rank than a Colonel—of higher rank if possible. It is hard for you and me, who have smiled at ranks and gold lace all our lives, to appreciate the immeasurable distance here between a Captain (say) and a Brigadier General. It is quite as great a difference as between a stenographer in the War Department and the Secretary of War.

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[1] On March 6, 1916, Page wrote the President telling him of the plans for the celebration, on April 23rd, of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth, and asking for a message to be read at a meeting at the Mansion House. President Wilson sent the following telegram:

"I join with all lovers of great literature in unqualified admiration of the great genius which spoke the human spirit in fuller measure and more authoritative tones than any other man of any race or age."

The English ought to be drawn and quartered for their sluggish stupidity in forever abusing one another and for forever grumbling. They seem to have (with their Allies, all of whom they maintain by money and supplies) the military situation well in hand. The Germans have had a hard blow and a serious setback at Verdun. In spite of that, the prevalent English mood is a mood of depression. They fear that they can never win a real victory but only a draw—and this just when they have voted for conscription and can thus continue to put men into the field—a larger reserve than Germany has. Waves of feeling sweep over them as billows break on a rocky shore. But the rock remains after the billows are all gone—luckily for them. My own belief is that the only invincible thing in Europe are these same English. If all Europe were against them instead of the Germans, still they'd win in the long run. Yet they wrangle and become "grouchy" and decline even to permit their friends to know what they are doing. I could with truth tell the whole race what I've often told groups of them—that they are good for nothing except to become ancestors of Americans and Colonials. In America and their large colonies, the English become free and hopeful. The despair, the depression, the melancholy, the slow ichor in the blood—of all Europeans, with the possible exception of the French—is what damns them all. It turns their eyes inward and backward. And yet these are the only invincible people in this world—this race. Perhaps I've told you that I talk with many women who have come to ask me to have inquiries made about their sons and husbands who are "missing." "Missing" generally means dead, and that is what they all fear. But they hope that it may mean imprisonment. They tell their stories with the same fortitude, the same self-restraint, the same sorrowful pride—noblewomen and working women alike. The Spartan women were weaklings beside the English. I daily grow stronger in my Americanism—real Americanism, not the hyphenated counterfeit. For the British race is the best race yet mixed and developed on this globe, and this race comes to its best under freer and more mobile conditions than this rainy isle of dukes and earls permits. People here now discuss everything with reference to "after the war." "What are we going to do after the war? What do we do best?" I have an easy answer. "Send your children to the United States. Your daughters will become handsomer and your sons more adaptable—they'll be English set free: that's what an American is. The best thing you've ever done is to breed men for freer lands." And they believe it—some of 'em do at least. These English are the most interesting study in the world. Just when you'd like to hang them for their stupidity, you become aware of such noble stuff in them that you thank God that they were your ancestors. And Europe would be a bloody slave pen to-day but for them. It's a shambles as it is.

They are not going to get tired. Peace? Yes, on their terms. And, while they are fighting for their lives, they are the only nation that is not fighting also for booty. And among many things that this war is teaching them is the stupidity of their arrogance when they twice provoked us to war. They pathetically yearn for our utmost good-will—even while they (some of them at least) curse us. My admiration for their racial qualities deepens while my impatience with their ways is heightened. I could write a book in worship of them and another book damning them—both true, both concrete, both definitely proving my thesis.

And thus the weary, wearing, endless but interesting days go on. A sort of new Old World will emerge at last, wherein the English will still be dominant and—let us hope—chastened and humbler and, therefore, greater than ever.

Sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
London, June 1, 1916.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have periods of great irritation with the English—almost of impatience with them. I suppose that any people would be put on edge by such a strain as this war. But not even such a strain can excuse the foolish flurry that public opinion here is having over one word in your speech to the League to Enforce Peace. You are reported to have said that we are not concerned with the causes or the *objects*[1] of this war. Forgetting all the rest of your speech, the press and the people have singled out the word "objects" and read it to mean that you see no purpose in the conflict, etc., etc., etc. I am sending House a lot of newspaper clippings: I spare *you* such things—except the enclosed letter that Lord Cromer wrote to the *Times*.

My analysis of this whole unhappy incident—for it has its serious as well as its silly side—is this: The German people are getting tired of the war—as who is not? They have been fed on "victories" that were fictitious and especially on the promise of victories that have not been won. Now their loyalty and submission must be fed on some other diet. The German leaders, therefore, have set going a great peace hubbub: *We* want peace; *we'll* make peace. It's the stupid English, who are whipped, that will not make peace. The continuance of the war, therefore, is wholly the fault of the English and their Allies. Thus, they seek to shift the responsibility for whatever fighting must yet be done off their own shoulders—to save their face to their own people and incidentally to affect neutral opinion. The English, who have received no peace proposal from the Germans and who, Sir Edward Grey recently informed me, have not even discussed peace with their Allies, of course understand this piece of German strategy, are annoyed by it—so annoyed that they have, for a time at least, banished the word "peace" from their vocabulary. A lady said to me to-day: "I no longer use the word: it smells German—as German as *Kultur*."

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[1] On May 27, 1916, President Wilson spoke before the League to Enforce Peace in Washington. In this address he declared that "the United States was not concerned with the causes and objects of the war. The obscure foundations from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or to explore." It is doubtful if any of Mr. Wilson's public utterances caused as much pain as this in the Allied counties.

It is on this mood that your word "objects" fell; and the anti-American-Government feeling is again all ablaze. Even our best friends of the London press—papers that have hitherto refrained from unfriendly comment—have broken over the censorship and berated us; and all London is talking about the American desire and design to force—or to try to force—peace. Many sections of society and of opinion have worked themselves into an ugly temper.

I am trying, without seeming to pay too much attention to it, to set some corrective influences at work. I am glad to say that the best of the American correspondents here, who are very loyal fellows, are giving their help. I can hardly say, as I wish I could, that this is merely a passing mood. Of course, the subject will presently be changed, but something of this unfortunate mood, I am afraid, will persist.

The serious aspect of it, apart from the gross misreading of your speech, is that our government is suspect of preferring a premature peace—a peace that would be really a German victory. The English no longer expect a stalemate; they expect a definite result in their favour. They have no foolish idea of driving the German armies to Berlin or of imposing humiliating terms; but they do feel sure of a victory over the German Army and of the complete restoration of Belgium, etc., etc. Just when this expectation has become fixed, he who talks peace talks treason!

Gossip (none of which, so far as I know, has yet got into print) even busies itself with House's visits: "What did he come here for? What message did he bring? He *said* nothing, but he was feeling for peace. We want no peace emissaries. We know ourselves when we shall want peace. The American Government is playing the German game. They don't wish us harm—we know that—but they don't yet even know what the war is about." This is the kind of talk that buzzes everywhere. With House in mind, a questioner asked Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons yesterday whether the Government meant to send a special diplomatic envoy to Washington. The answer was: "No, His Majesty's Government have complete confidence in its Ambassador to the United States." Thus, this English mood smites everybody on every side.

From this point of observation, the less said about peace, at least till some new and decisive event happen, the better.

All these things and suchlike, though, I take it, you wish to know them, unfortunate as they are, have nothing in them seriously to disturb the philosophic mind. They are, rather, measures of the abnormal effects of the strain of the war. Still, you may be sure that the English mood has reached a fixed determination to spend their last shilling and to send their last man rather than stop before their enemy gives up; and this German peace talk all about the world makes that determination all the stronger. The League to Enforce Peace will have its day, but its day will not come till peace come.

I resolutely refuse to be made the least unhappy by any such outburst of excitement, or the least uncomfortable. The fluctuations of feelings, like the fluctuations of battle, would confuse you if you watch them too minutely; the inevitable result after a while begins to be visible. The inevitable result as regards our relations with the English, will be that they and we will in time become the League to Enforce Peace; and they will thank you, as I now thank you, for showing that when Jefferson spoke of entangling alliances he didn't mean to discourage disentangling alliances.

You wouldn't believe that a three-years' absence and the study all the while of no domestic problem but always of the United States vs. the rest of the world could bring such a mass of ignorance to a man of fair intelligence as my mind now holds about the domestic political condition at home. All my cues are lost. I can't guess what will happen at Chicago next week;but I can't imagine that anything will happen which will put the election in any doubt. All the Americans that I see—and these days they are fewer than at any preceding time for fifty years—hold this opinion. This reminds me, by the way, to say that the resident Americans in London are a right-minded, well-behaved, patriotic group, although of no great importance (a black sheep here and there) who stand up for their country. They are now, for example, quietly and continuously trying to make their English friends understand the indecency of criticizing a speech they haven't read; for only two short paragraphs of what you said have been telegraphed here.

Yours sincerely and faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

June 1, 1916.

As I read this letter over, it seems to me unspeakably dull and depressing and most uninterestingly true. I am always, these recent days, swinging from pity and indignation to admiration: the English compel all these emotions and more. I swear at them and I bow low to them. This is not my bowing week. Great Heavens! it's a crazy world—a slaughter house where madness dwells. I keep calm—as calm as one can; and one must keep calm, well balanced, philosophical. That's half the battle.

W. H. P.

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
21 July, 1916, London.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . The following incidents and events confirm or throw some light on these general propositions: As I make it out, there was very little personal sorrow at the loss of Lord Kitchener.[1] This was not only because his intimate friends were few: he had spent most of his life away from home, but the general feeling was that his work was done. Many people, of course, knew too that he was incapable of team work and was a constant and severe trial to his cabinet associates. Yet his death made a profound impression. He had raised the great army—or his name had; and the whole nation roused itself to keep that army in munitions and to do everything else for it. Although the Germans had nothing to do with his death, his death nevertheless acted as an extraordinary stimulus to the war spirit of the whole English nation. You could almost see the grim determination rise in their minds as you see the hot sun raise the mercury in a thermometer.

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[1] Lord Kitchener lost his life on H. M. S. *Hampshire*, June 5, 1916.

Sir Edward Grey, who in my judgment is the greatest man in this group here, is so exceedingly considerate of the United States, has such a profound faith in our scheme of things—is so convinced and thorough-going a democrat, practically and idealistically, and so believes in our future—this man will go the whole length that his convictions and his environment will permit to meet our wishes. He has given many proofs of this. But on the particular subjects that directly bear on the conduct of the war he becomes more and more rigid. He has several times almost directly and openly confessed to me that the time has passed when he can always follow his own inclinations. When I find him in the right mood, I linger in his office after my particular business is done and draw him into a general conversation. Standing before his fire (we all had fires during the whole arctic June, and one is burning now in the room where I write) we have gone over schemes of government, the general relations of our two countries, the future of the English-speaking peoples, Wordsworth, fishing (he wrote a book that is a sort of modern Izaak Walton)—any sort of thing that is big and interesting. The other day I went to see him when I had no errand.

"I surprise you," I said, "by bringing you no trouble to-day. I called only to congratulate you on your elevation to the peerage."

He explained the drawbacks. He spoke of the wrench it gave him to leave the House of Commons after thirty years' service without a break, and he spoke with much emotion. He was put in the Lords because Kitchener's successor is a commoner and this makes an unlawful number of Cabinet Ministers in the Commons. Somebody had to become a peer, and for several reasons he is the most suitable and available man. We fell to talking at last about the whole subject of our differences. He remarked that in normal times a democracy takes too little interest in public affairs, but in times of stress it takes too dominating an interest. In normal times, it leaves the politicians too much to their own devices; in excited times it curtails too much their liberty of action. "Why, Mr. Page, if we were to open the door for German reservists to get home from North and South America, in the first place we should commit suicide, and in the second place—I can't say what English opinion in its present mood would do to the Government." There's his confession!

Another remark was this:

"The French Government is much more rigid than we are in construing precedents and international law. Yet their actions do not seem to stir up American resentment as ours do. Is there not in the American democracy a background of old controversies with us about shipping and no such background of any such controversies with the French?"

I couldn't keep from saying, "If that be true, it shows only that the French are luckier in their past than you."

Then he fell to talking about his own future, and this and that; and when I got downstairs where Tom Page[1] was waiting for me, I found him asleep in the automobile! A few nights later Sir Edward dined with me and he gave the whole evening to talk about his eagerness that the

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[1] Thomas Nelson Page, at that time American Ambassador to Italy.

United States should not pass severe judgments on the Allies during this life-and-death struggle. Tom Page and another American, just come from home, were here; and I told them to tell him quite frankly what the feeling is in the United States which he had heard from me *ad nauseam.* When they were done he said, "I know it. Now tell me what *I* can do?" He talked of little else to Mrs. Page, who has come to know him quite well and to whom he talks very freely. After the people had gone she said to me: "What's the hitch? It is impossible to believe that Sir Edward does less than he can do to meet our views and wishes. He is a simple, honest, straightforward truthful man. Isn't he?"

"Beyond question," said I.

"Well, what's the matter then—except British public opinion?"

"Very little else. We've got to argue with the whole British people. They've taken the Government, foreign policies and all, in hand."

I think that that is pretty nearly the whole truth.

The matter of our controversies about the mails and about shipping troubles is practically coming more and more into the hands of Lord Robert Cecil, Minister of Blockade, now of Cabinet rank. He is the ablest of the sons of old Lord Salisbury. I think he is the only Tory to the *n*th degree that I ever had a decided liking for. He was the bitterest critic of the Liberal Government, and now under the Coalition he has half his old enemies as bedfellows. I must say that he plays the game squarely. Ugly, gentle, courteous in the extreme, he told me one day that for the present there are only two articles in his working creed: "First and foremost, to win the war and save civilization on the earth, and secondly, to do all that I can to safeguard the rights of neutrals and especially the United States." And some things he does see, and he has done some things of practical value. I have had a long unofficial as well as official fight about the censorship—of news to the United States, as well as of other things. I convinced him as I convinced Sir Edward of the desirability of being open and generous to the correspondents of the American newspapers. Sir Edward agreed with me but he brought very little to pass; it wasn't quite his job. But Lord Robert has brought much to pass: he has had more time. And he has done a good deal to lessen the delay of the mails. He smooths many little paths. The broad highways are sometimes too much for him.

He is much interested in "the war after the war," i. e., the war of trade. That crusade was conducted here chiefly by Hughes, the Labour Prime Minister of Australia. Hughes stumped the Kingdom for it. Cities gave him their Freedom in silver cases. The universities gave him degrees. The people gave him loud applause. Half the press hailed him as a Moses. I made a pretty close study of Hughes. He is not a big man. In many ways he is an ignorant man. But he is an earnest fellow, and, I think, quite honest. His economic grasp is not wide—a somewhat narrow but very earnest and surely very convincing man, a free-and-easy and ready campaigner with a colonial breeziness which "takes." He used the background and setting of Australian help and loyalty with most excellent effect. And he and Lord Robert Cecil were among the British delegates to the Paris Economic Conference. Now some things the Allies will do in "the war after the war." Germans had used commercial and financial methods in England and in Russia in particular which were unmoral if not immoral—methods that might have been taken out of the books of a decade or so about the Standard Oil Company. They "dumped" and killed competition by starving out competitors. They conducted systems of commercial espionage, &c., &c., &c. The English were slow to detect these things and sluggish to move against them. They will be neither slow to see nor sluggish to act for some time after the war. They will try, too, to prevent dependence on Germany for dyestuffs and other monopolized articles. These things and suchlike they can and probably will do. No German ships will be allowed to touch here to carry English freight and passengers. Germans will, for a time, find London a hard money market. But the notion of a general Allied Zollverein with preferential tariffs will either never be carried into effect or it will break down so quickly that I am sure nobody need pay much present heed to it. Besides, they will find it impracticable to discriminate against neutrals in any comprehensive scheme. Trade makes its own customs and own laws—in the long run; and no nation is going to cut its own throat—very long. As the whole matter now stands, it is a war measure, a piece of Allied "frightfulness" like German Zeppelins; and it does seem to be annoying the Germans.

The truth is, the mind of this nation now takes in only one subject. Everybody thinks about that and works toward that, in his or her own way, all the time; and that is how to win the war. Nothing else concerns them. All other things seem of so little consequence in comparison that most other things have to wait. The battle in France goes on month after month. Day after day the London papers will contain less than twenty lines of dispatches from the United States, and these have some direct bearing on the war, e.g., the dispatches about the *Deutschland*. The same is true of other neutral countries. It is a time of but one subject for this half of the world. You cannot imagine the depressing monotony of this. Every American who comes here straight from home remarks after a week or less, "I didn't know it was this way. It seemed very different in the United States."

When I went to a camp where there are 3,000 interned (civilian) Germans a few weeks ago and for nearly the whole afternoon heard the complaints of their committees, one doctor struck an original note. "Sir," said he in his most earnest address to me, "the solemn truth is we are all on the road to the madhouse. We've been here, most of us, for nearly two years. We seem or may seem to you to have room enough; we have these grounds to walk and sit in; we do have enough air and space; but I assure you, sir, the monotony of this life is driving us to insanity. There are three men in the hospital now whose brains have gone wrong. I am a physician and I assure you we shall all be mad if we have to stay here much longer." I felt a strong impulse to applaud and to say that he wouldn't find it essentially different outside. . . .

Yet, strange as this paradox is, people are very cheerful. War has come to be the normal state of life: it is not only taken for granted—it gives these people activity that brings in some a sort of exaltation, in many more a form of milder excitement. But the point I have chiefly in mind is the impossibility of inducing anybody to think or to talk about anything else or to consider or to do anything that doesn't seem immediately to help to win it. We are living almost within the sound of the guns of a continuous Gettysburg. I am told that people at certain places on the east coast of England hear the guns distinctly except when the wind is against the sound; and whole trains of wounded and of prisoners are constantly arriving. There is a hospital just through the wall from where I write and another two doors from the building where our offices are. These instances are typical of most of the residential neighbourhoods. A continuous Gettysburg; a tyrannical public opinion; a universal concentration on one subject; an obedient government—to public opinion; a depressing monotony of subject and talk and work, relieved by the exaltation born of a belief in victory—this is the atmosphere we now live in. In the course of time—a long time, I hope—we'll all be on the way to the madhouse.

And the most important news of all is the Department's telegram asking if I think it advisable to go home for a personal conference. I do, decidedly—certainly for my own instruction and benefit. Three years and a half is a long time, especially when two have been war years. Such a visit will be of infinite help to me. Nor do I think that any newspaper sensation can now be made of my going. If leave be granted me, I shall follow this letter a week later. And it will be a great pleasure, as well as a great benefit, to see you, Mr. President.

Sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Soon after writing this letter Page sailed for the United States. The story of that visit has been told elsewhere.[1]

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[1] See Volume II, Chapter XIX.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE EVE OF WAR

I

THE long-anticipated change in the British Ministry took place in December, 1916. Lloyd George became Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour succeeded Lord Grey as Foreign Secretary. Page's impression of the new Premier appears in the following letter:

To the President

Embassy of the United States of America,
London, 30 December, 1916.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I made my telegram about Lloyd George so full last night that I have little left to write on that score. The Prime Minister has been ill, the Foreign Secretary has been ill (there's an epidemic of influenza), the Christmas holidays came—so far as any outsider's experience with the new Government goes, they have till now been inaccessible. But so far as any outsider can say, they have made an exceedingly good start. Of course, Lloyd George's enemies predict that he will not last six months. But they are his enemies. His friends and the public in general expect him to finish the war successfully, and (many think) pretty quickly. To me, the new Government seems to promise well—very well. There's a snap about it that the old Government lacked. Lloyd George is not a spent force, but one of the most energetic projectiles that I've ever watched or come in contact with. He said more in half an hour yesterday than Asquith ever told me in his life.

They are not going to yield their contention about the blockade, or about the mails. They are so hard-pressed for ships that they will keep all they can and dare within their reach. But on most other subjects I think they will be conciliatory and we can help (I come back to my old text) if we will be more courteous. The Department is too blustering, as, I think, it has always been. Its "will-not-stand-it's," its "intolerables," its "demands," and suchlike, belong to a war vocabulary or to the time of George III. This tone provokes many a denial when a courteous tone would get what we want. The Department, my dear Mr. President, is under-manned. Of course, I am not criticizing any man in it: I am saying only that it has about routine things a tone and a manner that defeat its own purposes, because, I think, there are far too few responsible men in it, and because none of them know the men they write to. Hence the vast importance of Polk's[1] coming here if for ever so brief a visit. He will not find enemies, as I fear he thinks, but most courteous gentlemen who wish to retain our real friendship. *Moriturus sum*,[2] and I can speak even more frankly than ever.

To come to a subject of smaller importance to the nation, I shall be glad when you can tell me your wishes about the end of my service. My arrangements were made in the beginning for my official demise on March 4th. My lease expires then. My servants were engaged till then. If I am to retain either or both, I must soon speak to landlord and butler. And if it should be your wish that I should remain three months or six longer (in which time the war may end—a circumstance that might make my successor's induction somewhat easier), I shall be happy to serve you, as I am in that and in all other ways. But it would be a convenience to know, at your earliest pleasure. My affairs at home could wait even for a year, but not longer.

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[1] Frank L. Polk, at that time Counsellor of the State Department and in charge of correspondence over the blockade. An unsuccessful attempt was made at this time to have him visit Great Britain for a discussion of shipping difficulties.

[2] Page had recently sent to Washington his resignation as Ambassador.

My own guess is—and it is a guess—that the Germans will give in within a year—perhaps within half a year. Then several months will be consumed by the peace-making quarrel. Their "invincibility" legend is fading out, between guns and hunger. The man who really makes the blockade lives around the corner (you never heard of him, a man named Harris,[1] a mere plain, Right Honorable Harris). He and Lloyd George are the two most energetic men that I know in this kingdom. Now Mrs. Harris is one of Mrs. Page's good friends and neighbours. That's the way I've come to know Harris very well; and he tells me things that no Cabinet Minister would ever whisper—perhaps doesn't know; such as the price of fish in any city in Germany, the calories that a man in Leipzig gets, the number of eggs that reach Berlin from Poland, and the value in dollars of a goose in Dresden. He knows, for he gets daily reports. "At 10 o'clock every night I take up the food reports from Germany and Austria: they are getting hungry and they will get hungrier yet before spring."

What a glimpse of war! It's the blockade that will conquer. This gentle, resolute, quiet man sits guardian at all the gates into Germany; and, tho' he wouldn't kill a hare, he watches Hunger beginning to stalk its victims, and he methodically tabulates its approaches and maps the shadow that it casts before. I think he would gladly lie down and die to-night to have the horrors of this infernal business ended.

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[1] The Right Honourable Frederick Leverton Harris.

But what I sat down to write you was my belief that Lloyd George will keep the programme that he sketched to me as far as you are willing he should. He will be frank. He is most friendly. He has often expressed his admiration for you—long before he could have known that he would become Prime Minister—and during the year he has shown and expressed to his intimates his confidence in me. He wishes confidentially to use me as a medium to reach you and for you to reach him whenever either of you have need or even an impulse. He is very direct. He does not use circumlocution. He doesn't "intimate": he says things straight out. "Call me on the telephone any time you like," was his parting word. This from the present ruler of the British Empire; for the Prime Minister is of course not only the Chief Executive but the chief and leader also of the House of Commons. I am sure he is quite sincere. Much may come of it, or little may come of it, as you or he will.

This change of government is quite as complete as a change of administration at Washington—when one party goes out and the other comes in. All that I can yet say about it is that it promises well for us.

Yours sincerely,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Memoranda

December 30, 1916.

Written, not for the sake of the gentlemen mentioned, but for possible help to the President and the Service.

Earl Kitchener of Khartoum (1850–1916), Secretary of State for War, 1914–1916

Rear-Admiral Sir William Reginald Hall, Director of Intelligence Division Admiralty War Staff, 1914–1918

Hoover:

Mr. Herbert C. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, would, if opportunity should offer, make a useful officer in the State Department. He is probably the only man living who has privately (i.e., without holding office) negotiated understandings with the British, French, German, Dutch, and Belgian governments. He personally knows and has had directd ealings with these governments, and his transactions with them have involved several hundred million dollars. He is a man of very considerable fortune—less than when the war began, for this relief work has cost him much. He was approached on behalf of the British Government with the suggestion that if he would become a British subject the Government would be pleased to give him an important executive post and with the hint that if he succeeded a title might await him. His answer was: "I'll do what I can for you with pleasure; but I'll be damned if I'll give up my American citizenship—not on your life!" Within the last six months two large financial organizations, each independently, have offered him $100,000 a year to enter their service; and an industrial company offered him $100,000 "to start with." He declined them all. When the Belgian relief work recently struck a financial snag, Hoover by telegraph got the promise of a loan in the United States to the British and French governments for Beglian relief of $150,000,000! I do not *know*, but I think he would be glad to turn his European experience to the patriotic use of our government. He is forty-two years old, a graduate of Leland Stanford Jr. University.

Laughlin:

There's nothing in our diplomatic service open to Laughlin in the way of promotion after he leaves this

Embassy—except an important post in the Department or the head of a foreign mission. If I were President, I'd make him an Ambassador. He has served in most capitals; he knows the game through and through; he's conscientious to a fault; he's patriotic to the marrow. He, too, has a fortune. After he quits the Service he will retire from active life. The Service oughtn't to lose one of the best men that has ever grown up in it, especially at so young an age.

Men like these, who have had experience abroad, would add much to the Department. I needn't say that neither of them knows of my writing this memorandum.

W. H. P.

The year, which had been an extremely vexatious one for Page, ended with no particularly bright spot on the horizon. Germany had continued her submarine attacks on ships carrying American passengers, and the President's activities were directed chiefly to promoting a peace which the Allies had notified him in advance that they would not accept. The degree to which the United States had sunk in the estimation of the world discouraged Page, especially as he believed that our policy had justified this unfavourable opinion. How disheartened the Ambassador was appears from the memorandum he wrote, as he says, "for myself only" on the last day of the year. Possibly Page's prediction that the actual bombardment of American ports would be necessary to produce war with Germany may be regarded as an extreme statement, yet the German acts that finally resulted in American participation—the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, the attempt to form a combination with Japan and Mexico against this country, with the consequent dismemberment of the United States, and the destruction of American lives on torpedoed ships—amounted to almost the same thing.

December 31, 1916.

I write this memorandum (for myself only) with the hope of revising it by the light of subsequent events; and I write it only to record my present fear, which I hope to have reason to abandon.

1

If at the beginning of Germany's onslaught on civilization—when Belgium was invaded, or, later, when the *Lusitania* was sunk, the President had given a sign or spoken a word the whole American people and American sentiment would have called Germany down quick and short and gone to war if necessary.

But the President had silenced and suppressed them by his making the artificial quality of neutrality a positive virtue and quality. He suppressed the natural feeling of Americans—even suppressed discussion as far as he could. This made hay for the Germans in the United States, and Bernstorff took command (to a large degree) of American sentiment. He threatened and the President feared. It has been a régime of fear of the Germans ever since—see the much greater deference of tone shown in Notes to Germany than in Notes to Great Britain. Thus Bernstorff has waxed more and more daring and more and more influential.

2

This distinct fear of the Germans and fear of war now causes the President's peace movement. If the war go on till spring he fears that the Germans will make good their threat to sink all ships (including American) that come to England. Hence the extreme desire for peace now.

3

I predict that the President cannot be made to lift a finger for war—until the Germans should actually bombard one of our ports. It's cowardice or pacifism that holds him back every time—Jeffersonianism.

About this time President Wilson's address to the Senate, delivered January 22, 1917, reached the London Embassy. The speech was sent to Page several days before being spoken, in order that he might have it published in full in certain newspapers well known for their pacifist tendencies—such as the *Nation*, the Manchester *Guardian*, and the *Daily News*. This oration represented President Wilson's final appeal for peace. In the main the opinions expressed were just and high minded, and the President's declarations of the principles that should govern the world in future were such as would be echoed by most men of good sense and good spirit. Unfortunately the address contained just one phrase that utterly destroyed its usefulness. Before any attempt could be made to organize a new world order, said President Wilson, it would be necessary to reëstablish peace in Europe. And this must be "a peace without victory." There are probably few Americans to-day who do not regard this phrase as one of the greatest mistakes of President Wilson's career; both those who approve his war policy and those who disapprove are unanimous on this point. The words "peace without victory" implied that, so far as the moral issues were concerned, there was little to choose between the Allies and the Central Powers. The overwhelming triumph of either side to the conflict could represent no gain for mankind. Wilson by implication at least made public acknowledgment that this conception of equal balance was wrong when two months afterward he insisted that the United States should declare war against Germany on the ground "that the world must be saved for democracy." That Page, after considering the import and inevitable effect of these fateful words, should have cabled President Wilson suggesting their omission from his forthcoming speech is only another instance of that farsightedness which he had exhibited from the beginning of the war.

To the President

London
Dated Jan. 20, 1917.
Rec'd 8:50 P. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5514. January 20, 1 P. M.

The following is strictly confidential and of immediate importance to the President.

Since there has been an apparent delay in delivering your speech to the Senate I venture respectfully to offer a comment on the phraseology in the sentence about "Peace without victory." My experience of the state of mind in this country makes me fear that unless you define your use of the word "victory" it will be misconstrued as an effort directly to influence the result of the present war, and even as an interference on behalf of Germany, since you took no step while the Germans were gaining military advantages. Any phrase which now appears to the Allies to interfere just when they hope to gain a striking military advantage is enough to provoke a storm of criticism that may greatly lessen your influence hereafter. Nothing can now stop the war before the almost imminent campaign in France for which every preparation has been made. There is a general expectation here that after that peace may soon come.

[If?] instead of "Peace without victory" you should amplify your statement in some manner such as "Peace without conquest" or "People of either side," your speech will have the greatest good effect. Your words as they stand may be construed here as a sort of denial of Balfour's letter and possibly even as an unfriendly interference in the war at its most critical moment.

The sentiments you express are the noblest utterance since the war began, and with the explanatory modification of this passage the speech will greatly further the cause you plead, enhance your influence, and fix you at the front of the movement for securing permanent peace.

PAGE.

II

On February 3rd, Bernstorff was informed that his career in the United States was at an end. The United States had severed diplomatic relations with Germany.

To the President

London, February 4, 1917.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington, D. C.

5595. February 4, noon. Personal to the President.

Your prompt action after your patient efforts to avoid a rupture will strengthen our national character and build up our national unity at home. In Europe it will put us in the highest esteem of all nations, including even the people of the Central Powers; it will shorten the war; it will preserve to us our proper high place in the family of great powers; it will immeasurably advance the influence of democracy and it will give you the lead with your constructive programme in insuring peace hereafter.

Mrs. Page thinks this telegram too impersonal. So it may be, but I am afraid to let myself go.

PAGE.

Telegram to the President

Dated February 6, 1917.
Rec'd Feb. 7, 2:30 A. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5616, February 6, 6 P. M.

Confidential to the Secretary and President.

I called on the Prime Minister yesterday. In a private unofficial talk he said that it would be an affectation to conceal his pleasure at our diplomatic break with Germany. H began immediately to talk about the probability of war following. I reminded him that the United States are arranging peace and that war was not in my vocabulary. He replied that it was well to look a little ahead in a private conversation. He hoped that in no event would our supply of ammunition to the Allies be curtailed, that a much larger supply of steel could be got from the United States, which munition factories here badly need, and he asked earnestly about our merchant shipbuilding activities.

"Are your shipyards on the Great Lakes doing their utmost? Vast numbers of small ships are now needed and whoever owns a ship can get rich and this condition will not soon change." I reminded him that supplies for belligerents concerned the belligerents' shipbuilding private concerns in the United States and not our government. But such reminders in no way stopped his rapid talk. He continued:

"If you are drawn into the war I shall be glad for many reasons, but especially because your government will then participate in the conference that concludes peace. I especially desire this because of your President's cool and patient and humane counsel, which will be wholesome for us all."

Then he asked, "Is there any way we can serve you? I have already directed our Army Chief of Staff [Robertson] and the first Sea Lord [Jellicoe] to give you all possible information out of our experience that you may ask for. You will find them communicative to you at any time," and he asked if any other departments of his government could serve us,—"if so come and see me at any time and I will open the way." Perhaps you will send me definite suggestions or instructions on this point.

PAGE.

Two months were to pass, however, before President Wilson took the irrevocable step. They were months filled with exciting events and humiliating moments. During this period Page kept something that resembled a diary; at least he jotted down, now and then, the thoughts that each succeeding crisis inspired. Much as Page welcomed the breach with Germany, and sincere as were his congratulations to the President over that event, the old doubt as to Wilson's constancy still prevailed. The President's reluctant and wavering course as Page regarded it—had left the belief, which he never abandoned, that Mr. Wilson had not understood the issues of the war—or that he persisted in misunderstanding them; that he placed the Allies and the Central Powers on the same moral level; that he looked upon Germany with an indulgent eye; that even after dismissing Bernstorff he sought in every conceivable way to keep the United States out of the war, and that only an overwhelming public sentiment at last forced him into the conflict. After the German declaration of unrestricted warfare American ships kept, for a period, within American harbours. They feared to leave, for they were helpless before submarine attack and knew that they would be torpedoed. The Government itself was unable to afford them any protection. This humiliating situation oppressed Page, as it did all right-thinking Americans and all friends of America in other countries. A law introduced in Congress and supported strongly by President Wilson authorized the arming of American merchant vessels. If they were permitted to carry guns, the captains of these vessels were prepared to run the gauntlet of the submarines; quite properly they declined to do so without such means of defence. This proposed law disclosed an ugly situation in the United States Senate. The purpose was to give American ships a certain protection against the attacks of German submarines, yet a small minority of the upper chamber, led by Senators LaFollette and Stone and assisted by the antiquated Senate rules, used all their ingenuity in efforts to prevent the matter from coming to a vote. Only an amendment to the Senate rules at last enabled the majority to pass the measure. The most sensational episode of this period, however, was the publication on March 1st of a telegram from Dr. Alfred Zimmermann, German Foreign Secretary, to the German Minister in Mexico, outlining a scheme for an alliance of Germany, Japan, and Mexico against the United States, and for the cession, in case of victory, of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico. The hopes, the fears, the uncertainties, the occasional flashes of encouragement and approval that possessed Page's mind in the face of these events are mirrored in his rather haphazard and informal jottings. They are merely the expression of fleeting and varying moods; but the period itself was a variable one; and these paragraphs have a great historic and psychological interest as portraying what was undoubtedly the state of the normal American mind during that great crisis of doubt and of hope. The quickness with which Page notes his approval of the President's acts, when they justify such approval, and the eagerness with which he watches for any sign of positive action, are not their least characteristic features.

February 25, 1917.

It is a momentous time. First, *the submarine menace:* The submarines are destroying shipping at an appalling rate. The percentage of lost ships—of all the ships afloat—is small, of course; and the hopeful men are always reminding us how small it is. This, to give comfort to the population. But there is a menace, nevertheless—a very grave menace. The small number of ships that can carry food—that can be spared from war uses—makes this percentage-comfort smaller than it seems. On the other hand, nobody knows, outside the Admiralty, how fast the Navy is capturing or destroying the submarines. After all, everything depends on this latter fact. The hope that I get is, since the Navy has twice overcome vigorous submarine attacks, they are likely to overcome this one. True, the Germans now have more submarines, larger ones and stronger; but the Navy has had corresponding experience. But food may be lacking in the meantime.

In the meantime, too, *American ships* keep port. For some reason our government will not arm our ships or permit them to be armed; and they are keeping their docks. We are practically blockaded—held up, held in, driven off the seas by the German threat!

The Germans on 22 February sank *seven Dutch* ships.

Thus, the *submarine menace* is very real; and there is much fear. Read Lloyd George's speech in the papers of two days ago about food restriction, production, etc., etc.

Then the military situation now, just before the severe fighting can be begun in France. The soldiers are all hopeful. General Sir Douglas Haig's famous interview a week ago with a French journalist predicts a clear victory. All the military men feel very sure. But there was a note of doubt through a large part of civilian life; the German Army is still very large—how strong, it remains to be seen. Awful carnage awaits us in any event—awful, awful, awful.

It is an anxious time.

(While Stevens is sketching me!)

Tuesday, February 27, 1917.

The President's Speech to Congress yesterday asking for authority and credit to establish "armed neutrality" is published and received without much comment in morning papers. It distresses W. A. W. P.[1] Laughlin is pleased.

"Admirable," he says. Looked at over a considerable period the President's course has progressed—slowly, perhaps, but steadily—from neutrality (hard and severe), to warning, to a break in diplomatic relations, to "armed neutrality." Apparently there is only one step more possible. Or can there be any intermediate step?

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[1] Mrs. W. H. Page.

About the time the President was delivering that speech news reached us and Washington of the torpedoing of the *Laconia* and the death of Mrs. and Miss Hoy, of Chicago. What effect will this have? An "overt act" surely.

Mr. Hoy, son and brother of the dead women called—greatly wrought up—will wire President—will join United States Army if we go to war, or British Army if we do not—an able, determined-looking fellow of thirty-six. Frost at Queenstown has made very good reports indeed on the *Laconia*—no German apology in any dispatch. I am asking official statement from Admiralty.

A letter from A. W. P.[1] is full of fire and ginger—not enough leadership for him.

Lord Grey of Fallodon writes me an excellent letter; it'll be a black page in American history if America sits still after six or seven Dutch boats have been sunk. (He hadn't heard of the *Laconia*.) He proposes that United States silently convoy American and neutral ships and see if Germany dares sink one or to sink a convoy.

More than a billion pounds of new money in the War Loan! That's impressive, surely.

Friday, March 2, 1917.

It would be hard to imagine a more rapid succession of exciting events, and yet we refuse to be excited! Startling things have become normal. The Zimmermann (Berlin) Mexican-Japan bomb burst to-day, the Zimmermann telegram to the German Minister in Mexico being in the morning papers. They gave it out in Washington (apparently) to cause Congress to give the President authority to arm merchant ships, &c., &c., as he should see fit, and to use the armed forces of the nation to protect commerce and life. It had that effect. An enormous majority in the House last night (nearly 500 to 13!) voted in favour of the resolution. I am curious to see the effect on the country. I have never abandoned the belief that if the President were really to lead, all the people would follow. Whether he will even now lead remains to be seen.

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[1] Arthur W. Page.

Yesterday I told Chinda, the Japanese Ambassador, about this Zimmermann telegram. He thought it a huge joke at first. To-day Yates Thompson confessed that it seemed to him a newspaper hoax! Nobody (few people surely) yet thoroughly understands the German. This telegram will go some distance surely to instruct the people of the U. S. A.

The danger is that with all the authority he wants (short of a formal declaration of war) the President will again wait, wait, wait—till an American liner be torpedoed! Or till an attack is made on our coast by a German submarine!

Many members of Congress and others in Washington do not yet believe the authenticity of this [Zimmermann] telegram. Hence the Department telegraphed to-day for the *German* of the translation, which I sent them. Now they have Bernstorff's code message, the German of it and the English of it. See the London papers' editorials.

Mr. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, and I to-day had a conference of an hour or more about exchange with the United States and the possibility of more loans there to pay for munitions and food bought there. Could a great popular loan be got in United States (like the great

Victory Loan here)? Probably if the right men took hold of it in every section of the U. S. Balfour has always held in the Cabinet that the problem of exchange is the great problem—not the submarine.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium goes slowly to its end. The King of Spain and the Queen of Holland are in it—as it will be organized; and all the official people have forgotten Hoover!

We dined to-night at Buckler's—the hosts, Miss Buckler, Mr. Lubbock (who will edit Henry James's Letters), the banker Grenfell, and we.

Lunched at Captain McDougall's—the Bryces, the Yates Thompsons and Jellicoes, and we.

Talk on League to Enforce Peace.

6 March, 1917.

Here's the rhetorical Inaugural.[1] It's no time for these fine words. The eleven "obstructionist" Senators are bad enough. But

(1) If W. W. had asked for the authority he wants a month earlier no filibuster could have succeeded.

(2) An old 1819 statute (to keep the hunters of Barbary pirates from attacking a civilized country?) need not stand in the way, if he were in earnest, were not looking for something to hold him back.

(3) He hasn't called Congress in extra session yet—which he'd do if he wished really to *do* anything.

(4) It's *the President* who still holds the people back. And our ships keep port yet—kept off the sea a month now by the Germans, and he does nothing to help this situation. And the *Laconia* has gone into the same limbo that has enveloped the *Lusitania* and the *Sussex* and all the rest.

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[1] President Wilson's second inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1917.

To the President

London, March 9, 1917.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.

5816, March 9, 9 A. M. Confidential, for the President and the Secretary only.

In reporting on the general feeling here I find that continued delay in sending out American ships, especially American liners, is producing an increasingly unfavourable impression. In spite of all explanations, which are imperfectly understood here, delay is taken to mean the submission of our Government to the German blockade. This is the view of the public and of most of the press. There is a tendency even in high government circles to regard the reasons for delay which are published here as technicalities which a national crisis should sweep aside. British opinion couples the delay of our ships with the sinking of the *Laconia* and the Zimmermann telegram and seems to be reaching the conclusion that our Government will not be able to take positive action under any provocation. The feeling which the newspaper dispatches from the United States produce on the British mind is that our Government is holding back our people until the blockade of our ships, the Zimmermann telegram, and the *Laconia* shall be forgotten, and until the British Navy shall overcome the German submarines. There is danger that this feeling harden into a conviction and interfere with any influence that we might otherwise have when peace comes.

So friendly a man as Viscount Grey of Fallodon writes me privately from his retirement: "I do not see how the United States can sit still while neutral shipping is swept off the sea. If no action is taken, it will be like a great blot in history or a failure that must grievously depress the future history of America."

PAGE.

13 March, 1917 (Tuesday).

It's well to be patient in judgment, surely. Hard on the President's tame and vague inaugural and his apparent wandering off into the by-way of a controversy with the Senate—hard on these came a few days ago a definite announcement that American ships will be armed fore and aft and that other ships, armed, will be admitted to our ports! And an Extra Session of Congress is called for April 16th.[1] Now that's the stuff!

Meantime, not only the Zimmermann Note to the German Minister in Mexico has done its work on public opinion, but there have come to light various German intrigues, for example, to get Colombia and Nicaragua to get into a row with the United States. Look out for the Canal! Then the practical certainty looms on the horizon of submarine bases somewhere in Central America.

Hence a complete reversal of the Government's position about admitting armed merchantmen. Hence a complete (almost complete) cessation of trade quarrels with Great Britain, such as filled the whole sky when I was in Washington last autumn! Even the President was full of indignation at the British Government for these atrocious crimes. Nobody saw or would believe that the Germans stirred up all this, then!

Curious coincidence: Bernstorff reached land in Norway on the very day Gerard reached Havana!

Bagdad fell on Sunday—the end of the German Eastern dream, for the English are not likely to give that up.

To-day I spoke at the unveiling (in St. Paul's) of a

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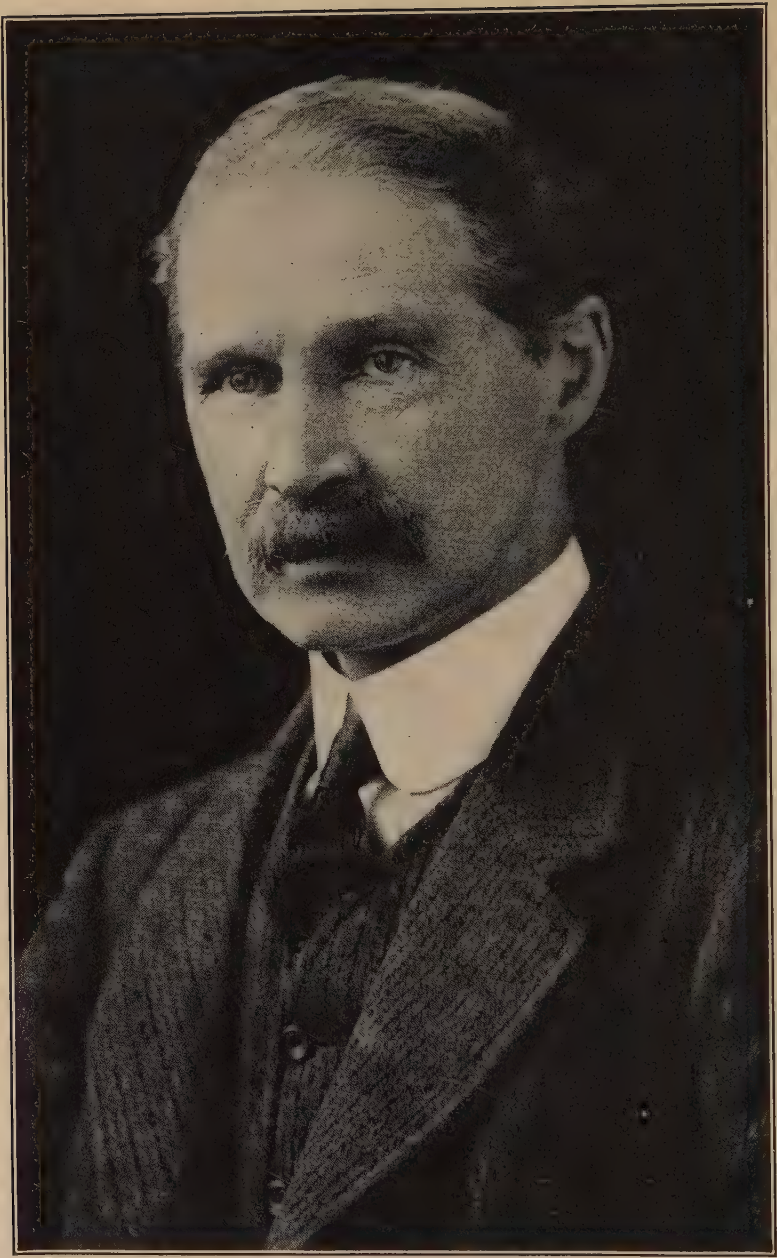
[1] An error; Congress met on April 2.

Staff of the American Embassy in London, 1918



The Rt. Hon. A. Bonar Law (1858–1923), Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1916–1918, Prime Minister, 1922–23 tablet to the memory of E. A. Abbey, H. R. H. the Princess Louise pulling the string. I took Mrs. Abbey to and from the Cathedral.

Unless Germany modifies her submarine plan and exempts all American ships, we shall now soon have war—unless peace come by an almost sudden collapse, which hardly seems likely. Well, we must go in, when we go in, "with both feet."

At Colefax's at dinner last night, Colefax and Sir George Askwith *et al.* speculated on whether Lloyd George will last as Premier till the war ends. The underhand intrigue that almost every group and party indulge in—Good Lord! deliver us! The Dardanelles Report was published (as the Asquith old Cabinet think) in order to discredit them. It *has* discredited them, whether that were the purpose or not.

20th March, 1917.

The Russian Revolution holds the attention, engages the speculation, and fills the newspapers.

As for American things—the three American ships, news of whose sinking came on Saturday, seem really to have stirred the people to a mood that may possibly cause them to run over the President. Everybody is now fearful lest, if we "get into the war," we'll get in with only one foot—will go submarine chasing, and when the British Navy has driven the submarines home, we'll quit war—*à la* Vera Cruz, and the expedition to catch Villa. That, however, can hardly be if Germany *declares* war on us—which she may not do, because of this very hope.

We haven't broken with Austria yet.—Peace?—

But our ships (American merchantmen) are coming with guns and gunners.

The Washington business of the Chancery has fallen off much. The State Department is engaged with other things.

The preceding paragraphs contain several references to the telegram sent by Herr Zimmermann, German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister in the City of Mexico. The complete story of this famous document will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII

THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM

ONE day, in the latter part of February, 1917, Page was requested to call upon Mr. Balfour at the Foreign Office. Mr. Balfour quietly handed the Ambassador a sheet of paper—a document that, in its influence upon American policy, proved to be the most sensational that the European War had so far brought forth. This paper contained the message that will be immortal as the Zimmermann telegram. It disclosed the preparations Germany was making for war with the United States. It was a message from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to Von Eckhardt, the German Minister in the City of Mexico. As Germany had no satisfactory method of communicating with Mexico, this telegram had been sent to Count Bernstorff in Washington, with instructions to forward it by cable to the German Minister in the Mexican Republic. This latter diplomat was directed to enter at once into negotiations with Venustiano Carranza, President of Mexico, and to make an alliance with Mexico for a joint German and Mexican invasion of the United States. In case this invasion succeeded, Mexico was to obtain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona—territory which she had lost to the United States as a result of the war of 1846, and which was now to be treated as a kind of Mexican Alsace-Lorraine and be "redeemed." The German plan also contemplated an attempt to detach Japan from her European Allies and persuade her to join the German-Mexican Alliance. President Carranza, who, as subsequent events disclosed, looked not unfavourably upon this ambitious proposal, was the same Carranza whom President Wilson had supported for the Mexican Presidency among a multitude of revolutionary candidates. Carranza was President of Mexico, indeed, as the result of a succession of events that amounted almost to American intervention.

Page at once transmitted this information to the State Department:

To the President

London,
Dated Feb. 24, 1917.
Rec'd 9 A. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE
Washington.
5746, February 24, 2 A. M.

In about three hours I shall send a telegram of great importance to the President and Secretary of State.

PAGE.

To the President

London,
Dated February 24, 1917.
Rec'd 8:30 P. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5747. February 24 1 P. M.
My 5746, February 24 8 P. M.

Confidental for the President and the Secretary of State.

Balfour has handed me the text of a cipher telegram from Zimmermann, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister to Mexico, which was sent via Washington and relayed by Bernstorff on January

19th. You can probably obtain a copy of the text relayed by Bernstorff from the cable office in Washington. The first group is the number of the telegram, one hundred and thirty, and the second is thirteen thousand and forty-two, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is ninety-seven thousand five hundred and fifty-six, which is Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German, and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows:

"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavour in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President [that is, President Carranza of Mexico] of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN."

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may be necessary in view of the threatened invasion of our territory.

The following paragraph is strictly confidential:

Early in the war, the British Government obtained possession of a copy of the German cipher code used in the above message and have made it their business to obtain copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams to Mexico, amongst others, which are sent back to London and deciphered here. This accounts for their being able to decipher this telegram from the German Government to their representative in Mexico, and also for the delay from January 19th until now in their receiving the information. This system has hitherto been a jealously guarded secret and is only divulged now to you by the British Government in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling toward the United States. They earnestly request that you will keep the source of your information and the British Government's method of obtaining it profoundly secret, but they put no prohibition on the publication of Zimmermann's telegram itself.

The copies of this and other telegrams were not obtained in Washington but were bought in Mexico.

I have thanked Balfour for the service his government has rendered us and suggest that a private official message of thanks from our government to him would be beneficial.

I am informed that this information has not yet been given to the Japanese Government, but I think it not unlikely that when it reaches them they may make a public statement on it in order to clear up their position regarding the United States and prove their good faith to their Allies.

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The manner in which the British had acquired this message is disclosed in Page's telegram. It was "bought in Mexico." That is, the British secret service had obtained it evidently from some approachable person in the Mexican capital—a practice which, it appears from Page's communication, had been going on for some time. An interesting additional fact is that this is not the only way in which the British obtained this priceless treasure. The German Government was so determined to make this Mexican alliance that it did not depend upon a single route for transmitting the Zimmermann message to Von Eckhardt. It dispatched it in several other ways. For one it used the wireless route from Nauen, Germany, to Sayville, Long Island. In the early days of the war, the American Government prohibited the use of this Sayville line except under American supervision; how little this prohibition interfered with the Germans is shown by the use they made of the Long Island station for this, the most fateful message sent to America during the war. As Page discloses to the President, the British had for a considerable period been reading the most secret German documents. Information entrusted to the air was easily obtained by the British and as easily deciphered. One of the most curious discoveries, and one that casts an illuminating light upon German simplicity, is the confident belief of the German Government that its secret service was in fact secret. Not once did the suspicion apparently rise that its proceedings were almost as well known to the British as though they had been published in the newspapers. The ciphers and codes of other nations might be read, but not the German; its secret methods of communication, like anything else German, were regarded as perfection. Not until the war was concluded did the Germans learn the truth: that the British for nearly four years had had continual access to their most confidential information. This German confidence in their Intelligence methods cost them dear. Relying upon the secrecy of their codes, they developed an amazing telegraphic loquacity in the course of the war. They were constantly filling the atmosphere with the most intimate news of their Navy, Army, and their Diplomatic Service, and all this information the British were quietly taking out of the ether and quickly deciphering. The result was that the British Government had as accurate information about everything German as the Germans themselves. The movement of every German submarine was about as well known to the British as it was to the German Admiralty; every time one left a German port the British had an accurate record of that fact; they followed its voyage day by day, and even plotted it on the map. Similarly, as soon as any message involving any department of the German Government was entrusted to wireless, the British promptly seized it and reduced it to understandable English.

On the 16th of January, 1917, the ever-watchful ears of the British wireless operators detected the characteristic spluttering which informed them that another German message was speeding through the air. When decoded, the British found that they possessed this somewhat disjointed but still extremely valuable document:

Zimmermann to Bernstorff for Eckhardt

W. 158,
16th January, 1917.

Most secret for Your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister in ? Mexico with . . . by a safe route.

Tel. No. 1

We propose to begin on the 1st February unrestricted submarine warfare. In doing so, however, we shall endeavour to keep America neutral . . . ? If we should not [succeed in doing so] we propose to [? Mexico] an alliance upon the following basis:

(joint) conduct of the war
(joint) conclusion of peace.

Your Excellency should for the present inform the President secretly [that we expect] war with the U. S. A. [possibly] [. . . Japan] and at the same time to negotiate between us and Japan . . . [Indecipherable sentence meaning please tell the President] that . . . our submarines . . . will compel England to peace in a few months. Acknowledge receipt.

ZIMMERMANN.

This somewhat confused message gives an idea of the difficulty of picking up wireless symbols sent across the Atlantic—at that time—in midwinter. But there is a conspicuous discrepancy between this telegram and the more complete and finished one sent to Bernstorff by way of the Washington cable office and by him relayed to the City of Mexico. The plan for dismembering the United States and making President Carranza a free gift of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona does not appear in it. Whether this omission was the result of defective wireless work or has another explanation is not yet clear.

Evidently Herr Zimmermann still feared that his instructions to Eckhardt would not reach their destination, for this very painstaking Foreign Secretary sent them by a third route. In the British Admiralty this Nauen-Sayville thoroughfare was known as the "main line"; it was the most direct and consequently the one most used for sending German dispatches to the United States.

But the Foreign Office had another way of communicating with its Ambassador in Washington. The extent to which Swedish diplomatic agents were transmitting German messages constituted one of the gravest scandals of the war. That the Swedish Foreign Office was so used is now no secret; in fact, the American Government itself disclosed the part Sweden was playing, when, in the summer of 1917, it published the notorious "sink without a trace" messages of the German Minister at Buenos Aires. The fact seems to be that the Swedish Court was openly pro-German; that popular opinion in Sweden similarly inclined to the German side; and, by January, 1917, the Swedish Foreign Office had become almost an integral part of the German organization. In many capitals German messages were frequently put in Swedish cipher and sent to Swedish Ministers in other countries and by them delivered to their German colleagues. Herr Zimmermann, in his desire to make certain that his Mexican telegram should reach Washington, again fell back upon the assistance of his Swedish confrères. He handed his message to the Swedish Minister to Berlin; this functionary sent it to Stockholm, Sweden; from this point it was cabled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and from that city cabled in turn to Washington. The journey was a roundabout one, covering about ten thousand miles. Yet nothing that was sent through the air or under the sea seemed to escape the watchful attention of the British Naval Intelligence, and this Swedish message was captured almost at the same moment as that one which was going by the "main line."

The German Government forwarded this dispatch to Washington in still another way. Indeed, the most remarkable incident in this remarkable transaction remains to be told. Evidently the German Foreign Office feared that transmission by wireless and cable transmission to Buenos Aires—by grace of the Swedish Government—might fail them. The prohibition the American Government had placed upon the use of wireless from Nauen to Sayville, Long Island, might naturally cause apprehension as to the delivery of messages sent by this route. The cable line from Stockholm to Buenos Aires and thence to Washington and Mexico was a round-about one and a message transmitted that way might conceivably fail to reach its destination. The dispatch of this telegram, however, was at that moment the most important business before the German Foreign Office, and its safe arrival in the City of Mexico must be assured at any cost. There was one method that was absolutely certain, though the fact that this should have occurred to Zimmermann must be regarded as one of the most audacious and even reckless strokes of the war. Humour of any kind the Germans seldom displayed at crises of this sort, yet the mechanism adopted to make certain that this plot against the American people would safely land on Bernstorff's desk evinces an unmistakable gift—even though an unconscious one—for the sardonic. The transaction reflects so seriously upon the methods of the State Department that it would probably never have seen the light had the Germans not made it public themselves. In 1919–20 the German Constituent Assembly held an elaborate investigation into the responsibility for the war. In this the Zimmermann telegram played its part. Among its published documents is a note which reveals one route by which this document found its way across the Atlantic.[1] It says: "Instructions to Minister v. Eckhardt were to be taken by letter by way of Washington by U-Boat on the 15th of January; since the U-Boat *Deutschland* did not start on her outward trip, these instructions were attached on January 16 to telegram No. 157, and through the offices of the American Embassy in Berlin telegraphed to Count Bernstorff by way of the State Department in Washington."

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[1] See Vol. II, p. 1337, "Official German Documents Relating to the World War. Translated under the supervision of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law."

What this means is that the German Foreign Office used the American Government as an errand boy for the transmission of a document that contained a plot against its own territorial integrity. The coolness with which Bernstorff sent his financial accounts to the German Foreign Office in the American diplomatic pouch—documents that contained the details of his propaganda work at Washington—has already been set forth.[1] The use of the American State Department in transmitting the Zimmermann telegram is another instance of a similar kind. The German Government, many times in the course of the war, used the good offices of the American State Department for transmitting messages to Ambassador Bernstorff. Germany had no cable communication with the United States, the wireless was unreliable and not always available, occasionally therefore the Germans would request Washington to serve in this capacity. As all such messages touched England before starting across the Atlantic, the consent of the British Government was necessary before the favour could be performed. That the British graciously permitted the Germans to use their cable facilities may possibly have seemed, at the time, an act savouring of the magnanimous; the fact, however, that the British possessed the German cipher and read all these messages as they sped through England creates the suspicion that they may have regarded this as a way of obtaining valuable information. From the American standpoint, however, the proceeding was without precedent. Ambassador Gerard, of course, is not subject to criticism, as he merely carried out the explicit orders of his Government. But it is a well-established principle that no government, especially in war time, ever transmits the dispatches or official documents of another without knowing what they are. No government ever makes such a request without submitting the contents of such official papers. Had the usual procedure been adopted, Germany would have handed its messages to the American Embassy in Berlin, which would have enciphered them into the American code and transmitted them to Washington. Unless Germany were willing to do this, the administration of course should have declined to act as the intermediary. The very fact that the Germans were unwilling to submit to this usual method in itself was a sufficient proof that the proffered document was one our Government could not send. That the Germans went to the extreme of using the State Department as a medium for sending such information to Bernstorff certainly discloses a contempt not flattering to American vanity; yet that Zimmermann should have used a route one of whose stopping places was English soil shows that he himself was almost as simple as he believed Washington to be.

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[1] See ante, page 274.

At this time President Wilson was practically his own Secretary of State, and these German messages were sent on his explicit orders. There are reasons to believe that the State Department itself disapproved the whole transaction. The procedure in the Zimmermann matter is especially illuminating. According to the German official statement, already quoted, this telegram was attached to another, No. 157, for the transmission of which the German Government had obtained the Presidential consent. The only information vouchsafed about this latter message was that it pertained to the "peace efforts" on which Mr. Wilson was then engaged. It did indeed refer to those peace endeavours, but in a most indirect fashion. In it the German Foreign Office informed Bernstorff that the German Government "promises the early termination of the war and the restoration of that peace which the President has so much at heart"—and that it proposed to bring about this result by the institution of unrestricted submarine warfare. Message "No. 157," in other words, was Germany's official notification to its Ambassador in Washington that it had decided to take the fateful step which brought the United States into the war. This message was sent January 16th, and in it Bernstorff was instructed not to notify Washington until the first of February. The Zimmermann telegram was attached; the whole document was put into the German cipher and handed to Mr. Gerard. Mr. Gerard telegraphed it to Copenhagen, thence it went to London, thence to the State Department at Washington and there was delivered by the State Department to Bernstorff. In London, of course, the Intelligence Service seized it and rendered it into comprehensible English.

Almost as soon as this communication was sent, therefore, the British Government acquired possession of it in four ways. It was "bought" in Mexico. It was picked up in the wireless route from Nauen to Sayville. It was intercepted on its way from Stockholm, Sweden, to Buenos Aires. It was sent by the American State Department—and also intercepted. Important as was the information that it contained of a Germanic attempt to secure a Mexican-Japanese alliance against the United States, the telegram and accompanying messages concealed another piece of information which was almost as startling. The first sentence declared that "we propose to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1st." The date of this message is January 16th—practically two weeks before Count Bernstorff made this announcement to the American authorities.

Both President Wilson and the State Department wished to give this Zimmermann telegram to the press. The President had sent Bernstorff home; relations with Germany had been severed; there seemed every likelihood that this act would result in war; this telegram, disclosing Germany's plot for the invasion by Mexicans of the United States and the dismemberment of American territory, would enormously strengthen the President's hand. Moreover, the President saw that this evidence of Teutonic intrigue would exert an important influence in a section of the country which, in his opinion, was not enthusiastic for war. The Middle Western and the Southwestern States would now discover that German aggression might concern them more intimately than they had previously suspected. They would find that the Kaiser, in the event of success, was planning to deliver large sections of their own region to Mexico.

Evidently the State Department wasted no time in locating the telegram in the Washington cable office. There it was discovered, just as Page had informed the President that it would be. The Administration itself, of course, had no suspicion that it was not authentic, but it foresaw that this question would arise. It wished to be able to assure the American public that it possessed the message and had deciphered it. Page was therefore asked if the British could not send the German code to Washington for this purpose:

To the Secretary of State

London,
Dated March 1, 1917,
Rec'd March 2, 12:30 A. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
March 1, 11 P. M.
Your 4493, February 28, 8 P. M.

CONFIDENTIAL. . . . The question of our having a copy of the code has been taken up, but there appear to be serious difficulties. I am told actual code would be of no use to us as it was never used straight, but with a great number of variations which are known to only one or two experts here. They cannot be spared to go to America. If you will send me copies of B's[1] cipher telegrams the British authorities will gladly decipher them as quickly as possible, giving me copies as fast as deciphered. I could telegraph texts or summaries in matters of importance and send the others by pouch. Neither Spring Rice nor Gaunt[2] knows anything about this matter.

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The matter was easily arranged, for Mr. Edward Bell, Secretary of Embassy in charge of Intelligence, was extremely close to the British Intelligence Service. The Zimmermann telegram, as uncovered in the Washington cable office, was sent to Mr. Bell. The British lent him their precious German code, and Mr. Bell in a few hours deciphered it. Thus Mr. Wilson could assure the American people, when the time came, of its absolute authenticity. The President insisted also that he should have it in the original German. The results of Mr. Bell's work are embodied in the following message.

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[1] Obviously meaning Bernstorff.

[2] British Naval Attaché at Washington.

To the Secretary of State

London,
Dated March 2, 1917,
Rec'd 10:45 P. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5789. March 2, 4 P. M.

My 5784 of to-day. Bell took the cipher text of the German messages contained in your 4494 of yesterday to the Admiralty and there, himself, deciphered it from the German code which is in the Admiralty's possession. The first group, 130, indicates Bernstorff's number of telegram number . . . The second group, 13042, indicates the code to be used in deciphering the cipher telegram. From the third group onwards, message reads as follows:

"Auswaertiges Amt telegraphiert Januar 16: No. I Ganz geheim selbst zu entziffern. Wir beabsichtigen am ersten Februar uneingeschraenkt U-Boot Krieg zu beginnen. Es wird versucht werden Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika trotzdem neutral zu erhalten. Fuer den Fall dass dies nicht gelingen sollte schlagen wir Mexico auf folgender Grundlage Buendnis vor; Gemeinsam Krieg fuehren. Friedenschluss. Reichlich finanzielle Unterstuetzung und Einverstaendnis unsererseits dass Mexico in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona frueher verlorenes Gebiet zurueck erobert. Regelung im einzelnen Euer Hochwohlgeboren ueberlassen. Sie wollen vorstehendes dem Praesidenten streng geheim eroeffnen, sobald Kriegsausbruch mit Vereinigten Staaten feststeht und Anregung hinzufuegen

Japan von sich aus zu sofortiger Betrachtung einzuladen und gleichzeitig zwischen uns und Japan zu vermitteln. Bitte den Praesidenten darauf hinweisen, dass ruecksichslose Anwendung unserer U-Boote jetzt Aussicht bietet, England in wenigen Monaten zum Frieden zu zwingen. Empfang bestaetigen. Zimmermann. Schluss der Depesche."

Punctuations are given as in German text. I am sending decode into German, group by group, by to-morrow's pouch.

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President Wilson acted wisely in not publishing this document until he had thus prepared himself to sustain its genuineness. The message was the product of an ignorant and stupid man; its context almost carried its own refutation. That any sane human being, still less the head of a great Foreign Department, could be guilty of dispatching such an incriminating document into the open ether was certain to prove a serious strain upon credulity. Even the well-disposed American would probably laugh the message away as a clumsy hoax, and that the enemies of Great Britain would denounce it as a British trick to embroil the United States with the Fatherland could be taken for granted. Page insisted that the evidence of its genuineness should be furnished the President so that, when these inevitable attacks were made, he would be able to assure the American people personally that this plot, ridiculous as it seemed, represented a serious endeavour of German statecraft. It was arranged first of all that Mr. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, should hand this message to the American Ambassador, and this is the reason that Page went to the Foreign Office and received it with all solemnity. The meaning of the ceremony was that the British Government had given its pledge that the communication was authentic. The first response from official Washington seemed to indicate a feeling of profound relief. The President's reply, acknowledging the document and expressing his thanks, was, as one of the secretaries expressed it, almost a "sigh"—not one of despair, however, but of satisfaction.

As had been anticipated the publication inspired numerous accusations that the proposed alliance was all a British hoax. Precisely those elements which were expected to attack it now proceeded to function according to form and the German-American press pilloried it as an easily detected fraud. Senator Lodge quieted this hubbub by offering a resolution, which was passed, asking the President if the message were a veracious one. The question was proper, since the publication, on March 1st, had not been made on the authority of the State Department; it had strangely appeared as a dispatch of the Associated Press, sent broadcast apparently upon its own responsibility. The President immediately issued a statement through the Secretary of State, which ended the discussion. "I have the honour to state," said Mr. Lansing in reply to the Senate's query, "that the Government is in possession of evidence which establishes the fact that the note referred to is authentic and that the evidence was procured by this Government during the present week." The next day Herr Zimmermann, the German Foreign Secretary, confounded his German-American apologists by admitting that the communication was official. The alacrity of Germany in making this admission has caused much astonishment. Had Zimmermann been dealing merely with a British wireless message he probably would have taken the risk of a denial; but Mr. Lansing's statement had disclosed that denials would be useless. Zimmermann knew that a Germanic disavowal would be followed by the production of the Bernstorff telegram discovered in a Washington telegraph office; instead of denying, therefore, the German Foreign Office undertook to explain.

President Wilson wished to quiet the detractors by publishing the German text, but the British had good reasons for not wishing this done.

To the Secretary of State

London,
Dated March 10, 1917,
Rec'd 5:30 P. M.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
5822, March 10, noon.
4516, March 8, 4 P. M.

The authorities directly concerned would prefer that the German text should not be published, as its publication in entirety would indicate that our Government or some other parties are able to decipher the German code used in its transmission from Washington to Mexico and the Germans would then cease using it elsewhere. This is information which, judging by Zimmermann's reported statements, they do not now possess and a confirmation of what they may suspect would be of great value to them. At present the Germans cannot know exactly where or how the leak occurred; for all they know a copy of the message may have been lost or removed from the German Embassy in Washington, or the leak might have occurred between Berlin and Washington.

Were serious doubts being cast in America on the genuineness of the instructions to the German Minister in Mexico the authorities here might reconsider their position, but as Zimmermann has admitted their genuineness in the Reichstag this can scarcely be the case.

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Had Zimmermann made this denial, he would probably have been embarrassed by a sheaf of other telegrams dealing with his frustrated statesmanship. After Bernstorff's dismissal by the United States, the Wilhelmstrasse became active once more. The Mexican Alliance appeared more desirable, as the probability of war with America increased.

Zimmermann to Eckhardt[1]

To Mexico
No. 11
8th Feb., 1917.

In continuation of No. 1.[2]

Most secret. Decipher personally. Provided there is no danger of secret being betrayed to U. S. A. you are desired without further delay to broach the question of an alliance to the President. The definite conclusion of an alliance, however, is dependent on outbreak of war between Germany and U. S. A. The President [President Carranza of Mexico] might even now, on his own account, sound Japan.

If the President declines from fear of subsequent revenge, you are empowered to offer him a definitive alliance after conclusion of peace, provided Mexico succeeds in drawing Japan into the Alliance.

ZIMMERMANN.

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[1] German Minister in Mexico.

[2] The original message of January 16th, published above.

The concluding paragraph is extremely illuminating; the alliance was to be no temporary expedient, lasting only for the "duration of the war"; it represented the permanent German policy; for an indefinite period the United States was to be faced with Germany, Mexico, and Japan on her Southern border. The dispatch was intended to convey to Carranza the news that the Monroe Doctrine had ceased to exist.

The reply to this communication was slow in coming, but it was suggestive:

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 7,
To: Berlin 26th February, 1917.
MOST SECRET

Beginning negotiations [? Carranza]
Could WE provide munitions?
Request reply.
[Several doubtful groups followed by] offered me a propaganda service here.

ECKHARDT.

On March 1st Washington published the original Zimmermann telegram, but the great sensation which this caused apparently did not interfere with the negotiations. On the very next day, when the world was ringing with denunciations of German duplicity, Von Eckhardt reported the result of his activities up to that time. His message reveals the fact, which was generally suspected, that the Mexican Government was not at all disinclined to the proposed alliance. At least, as Eckhardt says, it "willingly took the matter into consideration" and at once sought the Japanese Minister in Mexico, discussing it with him for "an hour and a half."

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 9,
To: Berlin March 2, 1917.
Reply to Telegram 15, par. 2.

A visit to the President[1] at Queretaro was inopportune, so I took the opportunity of a short visit here of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 20th February of sounding him. He willingly took the matter into consideration, and thereupon had a conversation, which lasted an hour and a half, with Japanese Minister, the tenor of which is unknown to me. He subsequently went away to see the President where he was staying at the time.

Yesterday after the publication by the *Universal*[2] I telegraphed to him in clear to give him a line, that the affair was unknown to me.

Von Eckhardt.

There was, of course, nothing improper in the fact that the Japanese Minister in Mexico should discuss the proposal with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs and President Carranza. It was, indeed, an act of friendship to the United States. His purpose in talking the thing over was merely to obtain information of the plot. As soon as the message was published, indeed, the Japanese Government repudiated the schemes Germany was concocting without its knowledge. In his first dispatch to Washington Page said that the Japanese Government would probably make a statement, and this statement was not long delayed. "The Government is confident," said the Japanese Foreign Office, "that the peoples and governments of the Entente will continue to have confidence in Japan's loyalty and its determination to extend all possible aid and share the difficulties and hardships until the struggle against Germany and cruelties ends."

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[1] Venustiano Carranza.

[2] This refers, of course, to Washington's publication of the first Zimmermann telegram.

Baron Shidehara, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs in Japan, said in a statement to the Associated Press, "We are greatly surprised to hear of the German proposal. We cannot imagine what Germany is thinking about to conceive that she could possibly involve us in war with the United States merely by asking Mexico. This is too ridiculous for words. Needless to say, Japan remains faithful to the Allies."

A message of March 7th reveals the anxiety that was growing in Berlin:

Zimmermann to Eckhardt

From: Berlin No. 16,
To: Mexico 7th March, 1917.

Please burn compromising instructions. Entirely approve your attitude. We have openly acknowledged cable Dispatch No. 1.[1] In connection with this, emphasize that instructions were only to be carried out after Declaration of War by America.

Cable Dispatch No. 11[2] is of course being kept strictly secret here also.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN.

Evidently the negotiations with Carranza had not ceased, however, for the question of supplying the Mexican army was a pressing one:

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[1] The original Zimmermann telegram of January 16, 1917.

[2] To Mexico. No. 11 of 8th February: "You are desired without further delay to broach the question of an alliance."

Zimmermann to Eckhardt

From: Berlin
To: Mexico
Reply to Telegram 7.[1]

No. 17,
17th March, 1917.

Find out what kind of munitions and arms are wanted and to what Mexican port on East or West Coast a German ship [under] foreign flag could proceed.

Mexico must procure arms so far as possible from Japan and South America.

But the German Foreign Office was not resting all its hopes upon Carranza. It could use his bitterest enemies in Mexican politics for its own purposes.

Mexico-German Military Attaché to Berlin

March 24th, 1917.

Vice-Consul at Mazatlán reports that Villa, aided by Germans, is expecting to receive three cargoes of munitions by sailing vessels to be landed between Mazatlán and Manzanillo. Cantu[2] is believed to be conniving.

Vice-Consul states this information is trustworthy.

Addressed to Washington.

On April 6th the American Congress declared the existence of a state of war with Germany. The German correspondence with Mexico clearly proves that the arrangement for an alliance was making rapid progress. A message of April 13th is sufficient:

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[1] From Mexico of 26th February: "Could WE provide arms and ammunition?"

[2] Another Mexican revolutionary leader. His field of operations was Lower California.

Zimmermann to Eckhardt

From: Berlin No. 29,
To: Mexico 13.4.17.

Request answer to No. 10 with a statement as to what sums would be required for the support of our policy.

Preparations are being made here to send over considerable sums (resources—possible inclusion of arms, etc.).

But Carranza was much vexed over the publication of the Zimmermann telegram. He was strongly in favour of the proposed German alliance; for the present, however, he thought that this publication had made it a difficult matter, but he announced his willingness to resume negotiations at a more propitious moment.

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 18,
To: Berlin 14th April, 1917.

Please omit the recognition group of the cipher.

President declared that he intends in all circumstances to remain neutral. If Mexico were nevertheless drawn into the war, we must see [the same intentionally vague phrase in the German]. The alliance, he said, had been stultified by its "premature publication" but would become necessary at a later period. As regards munitions—Mauser 7 mm—and money, he will answer when, after obtaining full powers from Congress, he has the sole power of decision in his hands.

Congress is dominated by the pro-German military party.

Meanwhile there were certain activities in which Germany could indulge without the "alliance."

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico 13.4.17,
To: Berlin No. 17 of 12th April
(26040, key 612).

For Captain Magea of Nadolny.
For Grand General Staff.

Mexico, 12th April. Where is Leutenant Wohst stationed? Has he sent about 25,000 dollars to Paul Hilken? He or somebody else is to send me money F....55793 Quartalsen Hermann.

With reference to the previous paragraph. Hermann (a smart fair-haired German with an Anglo-Saxon accent) professes to have received from General Staff a year ago, and renewed in January by Hilken, a commission to set fire to the Tampico oilfield, and proposes now to carry it out. He asks me whether he is to do it. Would it not be well for me to answer that I am not in communication with Berlin? Verdy believes him and his companion B....(51158) Gerds to be English or American spies. Request immediate answer—most immediate!

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 19,
To: Berlin 16th April.

I was present yesterday at the opening of the Congress.

President declares his strict neutrality. I was greeted both going and coming with a storm of cheers. VIVA ALEMANIA, VIVA EL....

On entering the chamber the whole house signified its approval. The American Ambassador received three faint hisses.

All that was lacking to make this great international episode fulfil all the requirements of drama was the element of comedy; and this the Germans, all unconsciously, now proceeded to supply. Astonished as were Americans and Englishmen when this Zimmermann telegram was made public on March 1st, the Imperial Government was more astonished still. The curiosity that was manifested in England and the United States as to the manner in which the leak had taken place was even more acutely felt in the Wilhelmstrasse. In all countries plenty of explanations were forthcoming. All of these paid Americans the compliment of assuming that they were responsible for the discovery—a misapprehension which both governments intended to disseminate. Especially amusing phases of the sensation were the attacks made in the British press upon their own inefficient Government; how inferior the British secret service was to the American! Every newspaper reporter on this side of the water explained the mystery in a way of his own. The one which seemed to be the most plausible was that the telegram had been found among Count Bernstorff's effects when his baggage was overhauled at Halifax. A circumstantial story was printed describing how American soldiers had captured Bernstorff's messenger on the Mexican border and found the incriminating evidence on his person.

The interest of the German Foreign Office in this great mystery took the form of many telegraphic messages which now passed back and forth across the Atlantic—all of which, like the original telegram itself, the British intercepted, deciphered, and placed permanently upon the record. These were passed around at the time among a select few in the American Embassy and the British Foreign Office and were the occasion of much hilarity. Page, with his alert sense of fun and with his well-known love of everything German, found these telegraphic manifestations of Teutonic woe an endless delight. Probably the most agitated man at that time in the German diplomatic service was Von Eckhardt, the German Minister in Mexico, who promptly saw in the newspaper accounts of March 1st the end of his diplomatic career, and who, with a lamentable lack of sportsmanship, proceeded to fix the blame upon his colleague at Washington.

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 8,
To: Berlin March 1st, 1917.

The newspaper here, the *Universal*, which is friendly to the Allies, publishes to-day exactly the same information as yesterday's Washington telegram, ostensibly as having been in President Wilson's hands since the breach of relations, the text of cable Dispatch A, No. 1. Of course I did not make the communication here. Treachery or indiscretion here out of the question; therefore apparently it happened in the U. S. A., or cipher 13040 is compromised.

Cable Dispatch No. 11,[1] which was forwarded to me by the other known way, has so far not been published.

I denied everything here.

Von Eckhardt.

But Berlin desired more explicit information:

Stumm to Eckhardt

To: Mexico No. 20,
21st March, 1917.

Most Secret. Decipher Personally

Please cable in same cipher who deciphered Cable Dispatches 1 and 11, how the originals and decodes were kept, and, in particular, whether both dispatches were kept in the same place.

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[1] The message of February 8th enjoining him to take up negotiations immediately for the alliance.

STUMM.[1]

The German Foreign Office apparently had no intention of letting Von Eckhardt off too easily. It persisted in believing that the trouble had all started in Mexico City:

Berlin to Eckhardt

From: Berlin No. 22,
To: Mexico 27th March, 1917.

Various indications suggest that the treachery was committed in Mexico.

The greatest caution is indicated.

Burn all compromising material.

This message evidently greatly disturbed Von Eckhardt, for he now gives impressive details, including additional evidence that Bernstorff's organization is guilty:

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico
To: Berlin 27th March, 1917.

Both dispatches were deciphered, in accordance with my special instructions, by Magnus. Both, as is the case with everything of a politically secret nature, were kept from the knowledge of the Chancery officials.

Telegram No. 1 was received here in cipher 13040, while Kinkel,[2] who is at present employed here, thinks he remembers that it was sent off by the Washington Embassy, like all telegrams sent here in cipher, from Cape Cod.[3]

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[1] Of the German Foreign Office in Berlin.

[2] Formerly an employé at the German Embassy in Washington.

[3] Where there was a cable station.

The originals in both cases were burned by Magnus and the ashes scattered. Both dispatches were kept in an absolutely secure steel safe, procured especially for the purpose and installed in the Chancery building, in Magnus's bedroom, up to the time when they were burned.

Reply to Tel. 21 Order carried out. Cable Dispatch No. 18 is still missing.

With a view to making preparations for the period after the war, I suggest if possible the immediate appointment of Herr Lubeck—compare report No. 69 of 3d November—as Commercial Adviser to the Embassy.

ECKHARDT.

Eckhardt to Zimmermann

From: Mexico No. 14,
To: Berlin 30.3.17.

Reply to Telegram No. 22. Greater caution than is always exercised here would be impossible. The text of telegrams which have arrived is read to me at night in my dwelling house by Magnus, in a low voice. My servant, who does not understand German, sleeps in an annex. Apart from this, the text is never anywhere but in Magnus's hand or in the steel safe, the method of opening which is known only to him and myself.

According to Kinkel, in Washington even secret telegrams were known to the whole Chancery. Two copies were regularly made for the Embassy records. Here there can be no question of carbon copies or waste paper.

Please inform me at once, as soon as we are exculpated, as we doubtless shall be; otherwise, I insist, as does Magnus also, on a judicial investigation, if necessary, by Consul Grunow.

With ref. to Tel. No. 11, Director Schmidt of the

Deutsche Bank, New York, has telegraphed to Lima that the probability of an American loan to Mexico was increasing.

(Signed) ECKHARDT.

This was too much. The "low voice," the "steel safe," the "scattered ashes," and non-German-speaking servant were evidently accepted by Berlin as complete exculpations of Von Eckhardt, who presently was delighted by the following telegram, giving him a clean bill of health:

Foreign Office to Eckhardt

From: Berlin No. 28,
To: Mexico 4.4.17.

After your telegram it is hardly conceivable that betrayal took place in Mexico. In face of it the indications which point in that direction lose their force. No blame rests on either you or Magnus.

FOREIGN OFFICE.

The humour of the situation, of course, resides in the fact that both Bernstorff and Von Eckhardt were responsible, for the message was uncovered both in Mexico City and Washington.

Who was mainly responsible for unearthing the Zimmermann telegram? The work was done by the Intelligence Service of the British Admiralty. The head of that department was Admiral William Reginald Hall, a man not widely known in the United States, but one to whom this country has every reason for profound gratitude. The part that Admiral Hall played in the war is vividly told by Page in a letter to the President:

To the President

London, March 17, 1918.

Dear Mr. President:

. . . Hall is one genius that the war has developed. Neither in fiction nor in fact can you find any such man to match him. Of the wonderful things that I know he has done, there are several that it would take an exciting volume to tell. The man is a genius—a clear case of genius. All other secret service men are amateurs by comparison. If there be any life left me after this war and if Hall's abnormal activity and ingenuity have not caused him to be translated, I wish to spend a week with him in some quiet place and then spend a year in writing out what he will have told me. That's the shortest cut to immortality for him and for me that has yet occurred to me. I shall never meet another man like him: that were too much to expect.

And (whether it becomes me to say so or not) Bell and I have his complete confidence and that fact entitles us to some special consideration in the esteem of our friends. For Hall can look through you and see the very muscular movements of your immortal soul while he is talking to you. Such eyes as the man has! My Lord! I do study these men here most diligently who have this vast and appalling War-Job. There are most uncommon creatures among them—men about whom our great-grandchildren will read in their school histories; but, of them all, the most extraordinary is this naval officer—of whom, probably, they'll never hear. He locks up certain documents "not to be opened till 20 years after this date." I've made up my mind to live twenty years more. I shall be present at the opening of that safe.

For his great achievements, Admiral Hall was made a Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George by a grateful Government. The record is appropriately concluded by the correspondence that passed between him and Page and Colonel House:

Page to Sir William Reginald Hall

American Embassy, London,
October 24, 1917.

DEAR SIR WILLIAM:

I have waited, perhaps ungracefully, to send you my congratulations on your K. C. M. G., because, once having you in range, I wished to take a double shot at you. I am sincerely glad, not only at this honour done you because you have so richly deserved it, but also because it was bestowed on you not in a long list of other honours, but all by itself on you alone. I think I see in this unusual fact a special significance. None of your many friends rejoice more truly than we who dwell and labour at the sign of this Embassy, which is most grateful to you.

And now I have the additional pleasure, under instructions sent to me directly by the President, to convey his personal thanks to you. I quote from his letter:

"You will at an early time take some private occasion to assure Admiral Hall of my very great appreciation of what he has done and of the spirit in which he has done it."

May I add an expression of my great personal gratification at being instructed to convey this message to you?

I am,
Yours most sincerely,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Sir William Reginald Hall to Page

25 October, 1917.

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I find it difficult to say how very much I appreciate your most kind letter, which has touched me deeply. I do assure you that nothing has given me more pleasure than the work which I have had the privilege of doing with you and your Embassy, and I shall ever feel grateful to you for the singular kindness you have shown to me. It will always be, as you may well imagine, a lasting memory and gratification to me that at a time when your great nation was taking a decision which affected the civilization of the whole world you honoured me with your confidence.

I don't know how to thank you for the kind words in which you convey the President's personal message.

I venture to ask that, should you be writing to the President, you would say to him that in honouring me with his words of warm appreciation, I feel that I have received the very highest reward, and that I shall always treasure his message as one of my most valued possessions.

I am, my dear Ambassador,
Very sincerely yours,
W. R. HALL.

Edward M. House to Sir William Reginald Hall

115 East 53rd Street,
New York.

REAR ADMIRAL HALL,
The Admiralty, London.

DEAR ADMIRAL HALL:

I want to congratulate you and felicitate you over the great work you have been doing.

I believe you were largely responsible for the overthrow of the recent German Ministry—certainly Zimmermann's downfall was brought about by the exposé of his note to the German Ambassador in Mexico.

I cannot think at the moment of any man who has done more useful service in this war than you, and I salute you.

Sincerely yours,
E. M. House.

September 22, 1917.

CHAPTER XIII

PRESIDENT WILSON'S ATTEMPT TO DETACH AUSTRIA FROM GERMANY

ON April 2d President Wilson asked Congress to declare that a state of war existed between the United States and Germany. On April 6th the two nations were at war.

To the President

London, April 17, 1917.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.

6018, April 17, 3 P. M. Confidential for the President. The King summoned me to Windsor Castle to spend last night and gave me a private audience of more than an hour, and talked with me again at some length after dinner. He is most appreciative of our help which he very frankly confessed is much needed. He hoped the naval, military, and technical men of both countries will so fully and frankly confer as to prevent our repeating British mistakes. The most serious submarine situation, the dire need of ships, and the fear lest Russia make a separate peace were his chief topics. He expressed high appreciation of Admiral Sims's visit and spoke of Mr. Balfour's mission,[1] for which I thanked him. He remarked: "I do not know how Balfour can now be spared, but nothing else is so important as giving your government all the information we have." He feels content with the present military situation in France, but he is much concerned, as everybody here is, who knows the facts, about the submarine warfare. He spoke with the greatest appreciation of your last speech in Congress and of your leadership.

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[1] To the United States. See Volume II, Chapter XXII.

He added: "People are talking much about absolute monarchs; there is no monarch, thank God, in Europe who has the power of the President."

His conversation throughout was full of appreciation.

PAGE.

Why did President Wilson let two months elapse between the dismissal of Bernstorff and the declaration of war against Germany? One reason for the President's delay appears in an important letter written Mr. Wilson on February 22d. The President was attempting to detach Austria-Hungary from the Germanic Alliance and cause that empire to make peace. The United States did not sever diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary when it gave Count Bernstorff his passports; and in fact this country did not declare war against the Dual Monarchy until December, 1917. Just what the effect would have been had Austria-Hungary separated from Germany in February, following the American break, is conjectural; it might have been extremely important; indeed, there was a probability that such a development in itself might have brought the European war to an end. One possible outcome would have been the shifting of the Italian Army to the western front—though this is doubtful; at least it would have made unnecessary British and French activities in Italy, and the energies of the British Navy in Mediterranean waters could have been transferred to the area south and west of Ireland. This in itself would have been a great gain. The elimination of Austria would have meant the speedy collapse of Bulgaria and Turkey, for these nations, their communications with Germany severed, would have been helpless and a speedy prey to the Allies. This would have ended the favourite Pan-German "Mittel-Europa" scheme, and destroyed the long-cherished dream of a Germanic empire extending from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. The separation of Austria-Hungary from Germany, could it have been accomplished at that time, would have been a great achievement, and the plan naturally enlisted the hearty coöperation of Page. There was, of course, practically no chance that it could succeed. Italy was an insurmountable obstacle. The terms she would demand of Austria would be terms that Austria, desperate as was her condition at that time, could hardly be expected to grant. But the incident has great interest, if for nothing else for the light which it sheds upon the methods and the temperament of Mr. Lloyd George.

The proposal at first was not cordially received by the Prime Minister. Page has left this record of his first conversation on the subject:

> He demurred at once. No; if Austria-Hungary make peace that will open blockade on the South; we shall have to grant her more than we wish to grant, etc., etc.,—all rapidly, like a machine-gun. And he asked me for the present not to mention the subject to any one, not even to any member of his Cabinet.

To the President

American Embassy, London.
22 February, 1917.

Dear Mr. President:

I telegraphed so fully about my interviews with Lloyd George concerning a possible Austrian peace proposal that

I need write only certain minor illuminative incidents. At my first interview I expressed my astonishment at his conclusion—that Austria was a greater hindrance to Germany as an ally than she would be as a neutral. To my arguments he simply repeated his conclusion—with amazing rapidity. The most hopeful thing that I could then induce him to say was that he would take some of his associates into his confidence and tell me when there was anything more to say. But on top of this he forbade me to mention the subject to any members of the Government "for the present." That for the time being balked me. It was as if an Ambassador at Washington had taken up a subject with you, had got your answer, and had asked leave to discuss it with members of your cabinet. If you had said "No," he would of course have been silenced on the penalty of forfeiting your confidence, if he had gone further. It occurred to me, then, that perhaps I had made a mistake in going to him first. Yet any other course would have been discourteous to him after his request that I should take up with him informal subjects of high importance; for he is practically Dictator. All that was left me to do was to pursue him relentlessly since I could pursue nobody else—or to give it up; and I had no idea of resting with the answer he had given me.

The very next day I had what seemed a piece of good luck. I was invited by a member of the Government to dinner a few evenings later—"the Prime Minister will come." After dinner I talked again with Lloyd George. "Nothing to say further yet," he said. "I haven't had a chance to go over the subject with the men I had in mind." Then I got up a little dinner myself for him, to which I invited the Jellicoes, the Bryces, and several other couples of high degree. Again I asked him, "What news?" He shook his head. I took him aside and remarked on the ease with which great men and great governments make great mistakes. Lloyd George is perhaps the easiest man to talk with (not necessarily to convince) of all men that hold high places. He has little dignity. He has no presence, except as an orator. He swears familiarly on easy occasion. But he has as quick a mind and as ready speech as any man that I ever encountered. It is impossible to realize that his casual deliverances are the Voice of the British Empire. After more talk, in which he had injected an oath or two, I made bold to say, "Good God! Prime Minister, have you forgotten that the whole object of the war is to reduce Europe to peace, and here may be peace that you are rejecting—how do you know?" But I got no satisfactory response. This was my third interview.

I still refused to believe that this was to be the end of the matter. Now, queer accidents happen when you keep steadily on one quest and see many people and hear much talk; and by an accident I found out that Curzon[1] was opposed to discussing peace with anybody and had talked with the Prime Minister, and that Jellicoe was eager for peace with Austria and had not been able to talk with the Prime Minister on the subject. That very night I dined with Lord Salisbury. Lady Curzon was there—without Lord Curzon. Lady Curzon, married just a month, began life as an Alabama girl, and you can yet distinguish the Alabama intonations in her speech as you now and then hear the oboe in an orchestra.

"Where's your husband?" I asked her.

"He had to spend the evening with the Prime Minister." That sounded somewhat discouraging.

The next day was Sunday. I recalled that Admiral Jellicoe left his ceaseless watch at the Admiralty every

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[1] At this time Lord Curzon was Lord President of the Council.

Sunday afternoon at five o'clock and went home to meet his friends at tea. At five o'clock, therefore, Mrs. Page and I were there to pay our respects. I could not yet mention the subject to the Admiral, but I gave him a chance to mention it to me. Not a word did he say about it. He told me only that fishing (for submarines) was pretty good—that's all.

A full week had passed and I had got no further than I had got at my first interview. I resolved to go and see the Prime Minister again at his office. I rehearsed my arguments, which seemed to me irrefutable, and I was determined to fight to the last ditch. To my surprise, he yielded at once—gracefully, easily, almost unbidden. He had somewhat modified his views, he said—provided—provided the greatest secrecy could be maintained. By this emphasis he gave me the cue to his thought and mood.

The German proposal of a peace conference a little while ago, which, because no terms were named, was regarded by the British as a trick, steeled the nation and the Government in particular against all peace talk till the spring campaign and the submarine war decide something. The very word "peace" was banished from the English vocabulary. Lloyd George himself in several speeches had declared that there could yet be no peace—no thought of peace. This was his state of mind when I first brought up the subject and the state of mind of the nation. Peace men had been hooted in the House of Commons and suspected peace meetings had been dispersed by the police. His emphasis on secrecy made his fear plain. No doubt if he could announce Austria's surrender that would be a great stroke. But if it got abroad that he were "dickering" with Austria or anybody else about peace, he would lose his Dictatorship overnight. He was afraid of the subject. But having discussed this particular possibility of eliminating Austria with some of his colleagues, he "had somewhat changed his view."

I feel the necessity to be on my guard with Lloyd George. Perhaps I do him wrong. Of course, his political enemies (and he has many and fierce enemies) say that he is tricky and untruthful. They are not good witnesses; no doubt their judgment is unfair. But he is changeable—mercurial. He reaches quick conclusions by his emotions as well as by his reason—he reasons with his emotions. He has been called the illiterate Prime Minister, "because he never reads or writes." He is the one public man in the Kingdom who has an undoubted touch of genius. He has also the defects of genius. He has vision and imagination, and his imagination at times runs away with him. That's the reason he's the most interesting man here—an amazing spectacle to watch. He compels admiration and permits, but does not compel, complete confidence. I wish I instinctively had the same unquestioning and unshakable confidence in him that I have in Edward Grey, whose genius is all the genius of character. A Scotch friend of Lloyd George was defending him the other night in a little group of men who expressed fear of his emotional adventures, and one of them asked about his truthfulness. "Oh, he's truthful—perfectly truthful. But a Scotsman's truth is a straight line. A Welshman's is more or less of a curve." But how this Kingdom has waked up under his leadership! There's something ramshackle and slipshod about him and his ways and his thought. But he has organized England, man power, pound power, mind power, will power, as perhaps no man ever did before.

The situation, therefore, so far as the mood of this

Government is concerned, is just as good as it would have been if the Prime Minister had given the answer we wanted when I first brought the subject to him—only a week was lost because of this extraordinary man's extraordinary mood and of his extraordinary attitude to me whereby he had me bound to secrecy on pain of becoming a traitor to him; and his extraordinary attitude to me comes of his admiration for you and from his wish to have you at the conference that will make peace.

Now, of course, I have talked with others. Mr. Balfour is eager to see a proposal from Austria, provided he can believe it to be a genuine proposal. He and others have some fear of the hand of Germany in it—fear that it may be a trick. But the answer that the Prime Minister gave me at my last interview is the answer of the Government. They will give thorough and appreciative attention to any proposal that comes.

Very heartily yours,
Walter H. Page.

Additional details appear in several entries in Page's memorandum book:

I made an engagement to call on the Prime Minister (Lloyd George) at 3:15. To prevent the newspapers from discovering my visit I walked to Downing Street and came up the steps at the end of the street, and I sent my car to wait for me at the steps of the German Embassy.

I renewed my conversation with the Prime Minister about receiving formally the offer of peace (if the President can send it now) of Austria-Hungary. The President (said I) is keeping relations with Austria-Hungary open with the hope of doing this great service. Have you anything to add to what you previously said? I then put the case as strongly as I could.

"It would be a good thing to detach Austria," said he.

Whew! He had said just the contrary a little more than a week ago! Curzon, I suspect, had talked with him before my other interview, and he had conferred with somebody else. I brought him to definiteness—at first, he was a little reluctant. But he finally committed himself fully.

As I walked away from Downing Street this reflection occurred to me: I sat down and talked to this Dictator of the British Empire as calmly and as easily as if I had gone to see a man on some trifling errand—to order a pair of shoes, to engage a room at a hotel, or any other commonplace errand. I stated the case earnestly but precisely as I would have stated any commonplace case to any man. He was still a little reluctant—he feared publicity. Would it be possible to let *him* alone see it?—No; the President wished to present it formally. He yielded—all in a commonplace way. We two men were talking about and trying to devise a plan for ending the war—surely a subject to excite anybody. There was no excitement—only a commonplace argument and at last a favourable response.

"Thank you; good-day."

"Good-day."

I fancy that all great transactions and conferences are done so. The momentousness of such occasions comes afterwards—is a sort of afterthought.

I fear that if the Austrian peace inquiry were now to come again, all the members of the Government would take the view of it which the Prime Minister took at first—that it was a mere German trick. As mild and temperate and just a man as Mr. Balfour said to me privately a little while ago: "I have the greatest admiration for the President, as you know; but I am afraid (and I do not wonder at it) that he does not yet know the German Government. It is an incredible thing. We did not know it either. If the President had known it he would never have addressed the European neutrals as he did when he broke relations with Germany. These neutrals are simply terrorized. They dare not speak out. Germany could and would smash Denmark and reduce her to ruins—as she did Belgium, Poland, and Serbia—she'd smash Denmark in a week and Holland in a month. She sinks their ships wholesale and drowns their crews till their ships have practically been taken off the seas. And what can they do? They are, in fact, already conquered but not destroyed."

CHAPTER XIV

"ON THE BRINK OF THE PRECIPICE"

THERE is a certain satisfaction and interest in recalling now the heartening effect upon the Allied cause produced by the American declaration of war. Just how desperate the situation was appears from a group of letters written in the summer and autumn of 1917. Over and over Page records his belief, and the belief of all the leaders in the Allied countries, that only American intervention had prevented an Allied defeat, or at least an inconclusive and humiliating peace.

To the President

June 8, 1917, London.

Dear Mr. President:

The liveliest satisfaction has of course been felt here at the way in which the registration of men under the conscription act went off. For two days it has been a chief topic of conversation everywhere. But this convincing and dramatic demonstration of our people's earnestness was not needed to make all thoughtful men here understand: they understood already. Our ready supply of large sums of money, the prompt coming of our destroyers and Admiral Sims, and now the coming of General Pershing, and Mr. Balfour's reception had done the work. The English appreciation is genuine, profound, and complete. The story is told about London of a deaf and half-blind old countess who had been a very great lady in her day—that, when someone told her that the United States had come in, she asked,

"Come into what?"

"Into the war."

Then she said, "Well, my dear, the subject doesn't interest me in the least."

I have heard of no other such deaf and blind person. The expressions of gratitude by all classes and on all sides are touching and continuous. In St. Paul's the other day an American legion of the Canadian Army brought an American and a Canadian flag to be blessed and to be deposited in the Cathedral till the end of the war. In the special prayers written for this service were two for the divine guidance of the President and people of the United States, and nothing would do but for Mrs. Page to take part in the ceremony by passing our flag from the donors to the Bishop. They work the poor lady and me in so many touching duties that we have composed a prayer of our own for protection against being worn out. The King asked me to present to him the first of our units of doctors and nurses. When another unit of nurses, on a sight-seeing tour, went to St. Paul's one day, they were met at the door by "a most engaging and well-informed clergyman," who spent hours in showing them everything. They accidentally discovered as they were coming away that he was "The Very Reverend and Honourable the Lord Bishop of London," who had come five miles to have the pleasure of meeting them. When I next saw him, he said: "Noble women whom God has sent in our extremity!" Although he is a fighting Bishop, his eyes were damp. I could write you a volume of such incidents. A group of our nurses were walking on the street and they met a dignified old Englishman. He pulled off his hat and bowed and said, "God bless you, ladies." The

Canon of Westminster asked the privilege of himself showing one group through the Abbey. An old man who has a fine country place twenty miles from London asked another group to spend Sunday with him. He had all our patriotic airs played, and a photographer took the group on his lawn, he among them; and he remarked, "This for posterity. This is an immortal event."

Admiral Sims is the darling of the Kingdom. The Admiralty regards him and treats him as if he were one of their own admirals. The Admiral[1] (British) at Queenstown is going on a fortnight's vacation and he has asked the Admiralty to put Sims in command there of both British and American fleets during his absence. He has made a great personal as well as professional impression. Among the most popular shows of the war is the film picturing the arrival of our destroyers, and admiring stories about our young naval officers constantly make their way from Ireland.

General Pershing comes to-day. The Government calls me in to ask whether they shall give him a government dinner. My reply was that General Pershing is come to fight andnot to dine;we are all in to win the war. "Help us on this errand first. Then, if there be time, we'll dine. Yet—also give him a dinner now, for the effect it will have at home. It will please our public to see that your hospitality and good feeling and appreciation are in good working order." So the dinner is on. Of course I also am giving him a dinner to meet the high military authorities and the Prime Minister.

It may please you to know that the Government consults me about everything, from small things like a dinner to things of great importance, asking, "How will this be received in the United States?" The King asked about his receiving the Admiral; now about his receiving the General. The secretaries in the Embassy have a joke among themselves—that the Ambassador has become a Member of the Government without portfolio. I have made several of the secretaries members of government committees—on Blockade and the like—at the Government's request. So far as I can see they are playing the game openly and squarely and opening all doors to us. The hinges on some of the doors are yet a little rusty, but they are shining them up.

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[1] Sir Lewis Bayly.

The prompt passage of the conscription act opened their eyes to our earnestness and efficiency more than any other single event.

While, of course, the Government is giving all its thought and attention to the conduct of the war, there is a constantly growing discussion of possible peace, and especially of economic arrangements to follow the war. Nobody sees peace or any near chance for it. But thoughtful men constantly discuss the possible advisability of making Trieste and Salonika "internationalized" ports so that the Balkan States may have free access to the Mediterranean. Everybody foresees the terrific difficulty that will arise in trying to apply any general principle in the Balkans—this on the assumption that the Allies win a decisive victory—give the Germans a complete thrashing. And trade after the war fills increasing space in print and in discussion, with no concrete result so far. But this topic is now worked very hard as a military weapon—for effect during the war. The British theory is that if Germany can be made to see that practically the whole world will discriminate against her trade after the war, she will be the more likely to give in at some early time. For this reason much emphasis is laid here on

Brazil, and for this reason hopes are entertained that China may come in.

By the way, it will please you to know that the British press and people have clearly seen the great influence on Central and South America of the policy of the United States toward these sister republics; and they applaud your management of this matter.

In fact, they understand us far better in every way than they ever did before; and they understand *you*. In half-a-dozen groups of men lately the conversation has turned (a favourite topic) on what personalities will emerge largest from the war. Somebody always remarks, "You mean *after* the American President?" And the discussion starts on that basis.

I still maintain that the attitude (the changed and changing attitude) of the English is the most interesting subject in the world and—in the long run—the most important. It is very difficult to describe it. I have twice tried in letters to you that seemed too unsatisfactory to send. Take certain facts like these: The first discussion of sensible and appreciative plans for really popular education—the education of all the people—ever heard in this Kingdom is now beginning; and the head of the Government Chemical Research Bureau, in discussing with Professor Hulett the work of German chemists, remarked, "It isn't the Germans we are afraid of, it's you Americans";—take these facts (and I could put down 300 such), you can't help seeing and feeling the ground-swell influence of the United States as the strongest pull on this English planet that it has ever been subjected to; *and they know it.* If Europe is to be made even reasonably safe, it'll be only through our help; *and they know it.* I heard an Australian general tell an old peer that if the

British Empire didn't make a proper place in Imperial Government for the great Colonies, Australia would see if she couldn't join the American Union! The English are waking up to see the vast burden of useless *impedimenta* they carry. All interesting things follow from this.

The studies that all these subjects open—enticing and fascinating and absorbing and necessary studies—I have been trying with my staff to make, at least in some fashion. Mr. Buckler[1] is working in what time he can get on the Balkan situation; he and I together are looking up and keeping tabulated all that seems worth while about peace terms and proposals and possibilities and the feelings and hopes of men worth while. And we have other such studies going. There are of course always many interesting conversations on these subjects. We have equipped a dining room in the basement of one of our office buildings where we have luncheon served (at our personal expense) and we have anybody there from Ministers and Admirals down, out of whom we wish to get information. With high sailors and soldiers and statesmen and writers of books thus to help us, we are trying to pack ourselves and this Embassy as full as we can.

Meantime, praise God, our destroyers are making the approach to these shores appreciably safer, General Pershing is now in conference with the Big British Generals, our doctors and nurses have been going to France for a fortnight (you would be thrilled to see the important English people who have flocked to my house to meet them), and gratitude to the United States beams on every countenance we meet.

Yours very faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

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[1] William H. Buckler, Special Attaché at the London Embassy.

To the President

London, 22 June, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Problems of organization press for larger and permanent coöperation with the British. I have telegraphed about the War Conferences which the European Allies have held from time to time. The next Conference will come about the middle of July. Mr. Balfour thinks, and I think, that our Government ought to be represented. The Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the War Minister will probably attend it, with a General as a military expert. The larger policies regarding the conduct of the war are considered. Incidentally, these Conferences bring to light the incredible friction between the Allies and their apparently irreconcilable differences. It is not a happy family. For instance, the Italian Prime Minister, I hear on good authority, has already served notice that his Government will not be represented at the next Conference if peace with Austria is to be discussed. Here comes the everlasting question of boundaries. Italy opposed to the last the deposition of King Constantine. A communication that I am sending to the Department from the Greek Minister here, by the instruction of his Government, throws light on the Italian attitude. Then, too, there is the perpetual and baneful Trade-Union of Monarchs. Almost every country that has a king is opposed to the deposition of any king. The Tsar, the King of Spain, the King of Italy, and presumably Queen Alexandra, at least, of England, who is Constantine's aunt, used their influence to the utmost to save him. These cross-currents of dynasties, the special ambitions for territory of practically every continental Ally, which of course conflict, the commitments of England herself to some of them made to get them or to keep them in the war—all these make such a tangle as to defy logical adjustment; and underneath the surface a quarrel is always imminent. When Lloyd George told me this morning that any effort to make a separate peace with Austria-Hungary or Bulgaria was premature because it seemed wise to wait and to see whether Russia will fight again, he did not know that I knew of Italy's unwillingness to discuss peace with Austria; and if Italy is unwilling to discuss peace with Austria, she is unwilling, of course, to discuss peace with Bulgaria. Lloyd George gave me one reason—no doubt a good one, but there was also another and stronger reason in his mind.

Perhaps we ought to be represented at these Conferences, if for no other reason, to get a clear insight into these strong controversies and differences under the surface. To judge only from such as have come, and as are constantly coming to my knowledge, they are numerous and exceedingly embarrassing.

Some weeks ago there was a more or less general fear here lest France herself might say, "Well, I've almost exhausted myself; I can go no further. Great Britain must carry on the war." The coming in of the United States gave her new spirit and new hope. This accounts in some measure for the extraordinary display of sentiment when General Pershing reached Paris—I cannot say how much cold truth there is in this quite generally held British opinion. But I do know that it had much to do with their profound appreciation of our help.

Again—the friction between the Australians and Canadians and the British sometimes reaches seriousness. There is likely to be a stiff controversy when the lid is lifted.

Many such seamy-side pieces of information come to me, but only as reflected and refracted by English minds. I imagine we ought to learn them—such as are true—authoritatively. I get them by sometimes eating three meals a day and committing other such intimacies with the men who have attended these Conferences.

Regarding the establishment of a military mission here—that seems necessary and urgent. Men, committees, commissions come, some bringing credentials from some department of our Government and some bringing none; and in not a few cases several of them seek the same information that was given to their predecessors a week or two weeks ago. Then they go away. In a few more weeks new information is acquired and nobody gets that. This whole business of our Government seeking information from this Government ought to be systematized and coördinated. Officers of our Government of technical training ought to remain here—most of the subjects dealt with are military—and inquiries should be made of this commission by all branches of our Government, and all inquirers should come to them. About this, too, I have telegraphed. The principal Allied governments have just such a practical working arrangement. I have telegraphed about this, too.

The British views that reach me in army circles are as cheerful and hopeful as the news that comes from navy sources is discouraging. There is no danger of a serious shortage of food for any period that may be foreseen. But the generally informed fear a very serious lack of such materials as oils, steel, copper, etc., for uses both for the fleet and for the army. There is no doubt of a very grave fear raised by the submarines. The Admiralty is dejected. No submarine "antidote" has been found. A few are sunk. But there are vast armies that must yet be killed before the Germans will *have* to give in. The feeling here is that if the submarine success were discouragingly diminished, the spirit of the German Army would quickly fail.

The multitudinous tasks of preparation in the United States reported, but reported very briefly, in the London papers, make a most favourable impression, and these reports are read here most gratefully. In their gratitude there is a confession of the Allies' dire need of our help—a far more urgent need than anybody confesses or than anybody realizes but the men who know the inside facts. I have had momentary fears that the British may depend on us too much and expect too much—a state of mind that, however much we do, will lead to disappointment. But there is yet no evidence of this. And I am glad to say I have yet seen no evidence to show that the British will "lie down on us"—relax their efforts because we are now helping. They are not built that way. They have vices and they are not always easy to live with or to fight and die with and we shall have our troubles with them. But I do not expect them to try to put their own tasks on us. Their continental allies have depended too much on British help, and the British have keenly felt the unfairness of being too heavily leant on.

In fact, nothing could keep these nations all together a week but dire necessity: it's another case of all hanging together or all hanging separately.

Two facts mark the successful progress of the war: the fall of kings—all thrones are unsteadier; and the steady fall of the mark. Its decline was greatly accelerated by our coming into the war. This decline is a measure of the judgment of the world on the struggle.

Northcliffe's[1] errand is causing criticism here, which was inevitable. He has many bitter enemies, being a stimulating and contentious fellow. He has done good service in many (perhaps most) of his crusades; for most of them have been directed against more or less incompetent men. He indulges in crusades rather than criticism. But I think the criticism of him has now spent itself. And since he has no diplomatic authority and is a business man of extraordinary ability and energy, I think his appointment a good one. Our Government may deal with him very frankly. He is the friendliest of Englishmen to us. His papers have all been singularly fair to us. He knows and likes the United States, and it is very well worth our while to show our appreciation of his friendliness and helpfulness. Any attention that you yourself may show him will bear good fruit. He is perhaps the most powerful man now living in Great Britain—how much by reason of and how much in spite of his methods, it would be hard to say. For the twenty years that I have known him he has done our country steady and useful service in his vast influence on British opinion. . . .

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[1] In June Lord Northcliffe came to the United States as head of a British mission.

Sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
14 August, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

No suggestion or proposal has been received here with a heartier welcome than your proposal to send Admiral Mayo and other naval officers for a conference here about the naval situation. Mr. Balfour welcomed it eagerly and the Admiralty is equally pleased. I ought to add that Admiral Sims, too, is particularly pleased.

Since the war began the Admiralty has of course hoped that the German fleet would come out for a fight. The

Jutland battle was a bitter disappointment because it was not conclusive; and since then, as before, the British naval programme has been defensive. The Admiralty opinion, which, as I understand, is unanimous among naval officers, is that the German naval bases (in Germany) are impregnable. Mines, submarines, and the biggest concealed guns in the world are supposed to make any sea attack a foolhardy failure. In front the Germans have Heligoland and they have an open back door into the Baltic.

I don't know how sound this reasoning is; but I do know that its soundness has at every stage of the war been questioned—somewhat timidly, but still questioned. There has been an undercurrent of doubt. The several changes that have been made in the personnel of the Admiralty have seemed to have a thought of some change of the defensive programme in mind. The one method of attack that one ever hears discussed openly is by aircraft. For that, the British have never had enough machines to spare. Moreover, it seems to be too far from the German naval bases to any British aircraft base, unless seaplanes can be used from the North Sea.

But there seems to be no doubt of the open-mindedness of the Government to any suggestion.

The most pressing naval question—the most pressing question of the whole war—continues to be the submarines. They have found no "antidote." The "mystery" ships catch a few—I do not know how many, but not enough to discourage the Germans. A few more are destroyed by other methods; but the problem of catching them at their exit is unsolved. They make their way along the territorial waters of Denmark and Holland and come out to sea wherever they find it safe. I have gone over many maps, charts, and diagrams on which the presence of submarines in British waters and at sea is indicated; and the one thing that seems to be conclusively proved is that the convoy is the best means so far put into practice to increase safety. The future of the world seems to me to hang on the answer to this question: Can the war be won in spite of the submarines? Can a great American army be brought over and its large subsequent supply fleet be sufficiently safeguarded? As matters now go, three large British ships are sunk a day. How many are sunk of other nationalities, I do not know. At this rate, the Allies can hold out long enough to win provided our armies and supplies can come over—convoyed, of course—with reasonable safety. But in the course of time the present rate of ship destruction will greatly weaken the Allied endurance.

British opinion is that the war must be won on the battlefield—that the German armies must be beaten by arms and by economic pressure in Germany; that the German naval bases are untakeable; that the submarines must be endured. And it is universally understood that American intervention is all that saved or can save the Allied cause. France will be practically exhausted by the end of this year as an offensive power; Italy counts for little except to keep a certain number of Austrian troops engaged; Russia, as a fighting force, probably will not recover in time. The probability that is generally accepted is that the war, unless Germany collapse during the next six months by reason of economic exhaustion or by the falling away of Austria or Turkey or both, will become a war between Germany and the English-speaking nations, all which except the United States are already partially exhausted.

The waste in the war caused by the failures of the European allies to work together with complete unity is one of the most pitiful aspects of the conflict. The recently begun offensive by the British on the northern French coast, now interrupted for the moment by heavy rains, ought to have been undertaken long ago. But the French withheld their consent because (so the British military authorities say) a certain section of French opinion feared, or pretended to fear, that the British would keep these coast towns and cities if they were permitted to retake them from the Germans! It is reported, too, that the Belgians objected. The Belgian Army now holds 3,000 yards of the whole trench line: that's all; and the British have so little confidence in them that they keep all the time in easy reach enough reserves to hold this 3,000 yards if the Germans should attack it. This jealousy and distrust run more or less through all the dealings of the continental allies with one another. It's a sad tale.

Yours sincerely,
Walter H. Page.

To the President

London, September 3, 1917.

Dear Mr. President:

. . . Some time ago, in a general conversation, Mr. Balfour said something like this to me: "There is universal admiration and wonder at the American energy and earnestness in getting into the war, which has no parallel. But there are people who privately express a certain fear lest your ardour may cool with the first wave of war-weariness. What should one say to them? Mind you, I have no such fear myself, but I am sometimes met with the necessity to allay it in weaker minds."

I replied: "To put it in good American, the real answer to any such person is, 'Go to hell!' But the judicious answer is, 'Who is going to cool American ardour and how will he go about it? The dam is burst and the flood is come. Will you do me the favour to refer all such persons to me?'" I haven't seen any such yet. But such a fear, which I have no doubt was felt in ignorant quarters, is forever laid by your letter to the Pope. And the leadership of the war is now definitely and confessedly transferred to you, in British opinion.

The acknowledgment of this took many forms even before this letter. Several of your speeches, notably your speech asking for a declaration of war, have been reprinted in dozens of forms for wide distribution. There's hardly a reading household in the Kingdom but has a copy.

. . . The telegrams and other documents, telegraphed to you, which show the customary insincerity and cold-blooded willingness to murder, touching the Argentine Republic, it is here hoped, will, if you have published them, bring the Argentine Government into the war. It is hoped, too, that the proof of Sweden's using her Ministers and pouches in Germany's behalf may cause a change of government in Sweden.[1] The smuggling that has been done through Sweden is the most helpful to Germany of all her channels of supply; and the large quantity of iron ore that has gone from Swedish mines is, perhaps, the most valuable help from outside that Germany has got since the war began.

Admiral Mayo's coming has given the whole Government and especially the Admiralty great satisfaction. As soon as he came I invited the chief Admiralty officers and British Admirals to dinner to meet him, and they have shown him continuous attention since. He told me to-day that they are showing him everything that he cares to see and are answering all his questions. The Naval Conference (British, French, Italian, and American) begins to-morrow. Immediately after the Conference ends, Admiral Mayo will visit the Grand Fleet. The submarine activity continues (as I regard it) to be a most serious thing. Convoyed ships have come safely, which seems to point to success in our getting troops and supplies to France. But the toll that the submarines continue to take of unconvoyed freight ships is making the trouble of shipping very great. All ships will have to be convoyed.

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[1] In early September Secretary Lansing published a series of telegrams sent by Count Luxburg, German Minister in Buenos Aires, containing instructions to German submarine commanders. The phrase "sink without a trace" gave these messages a particular infamy. They were sent in Swedish code through the Swedish Legation in Buenos Aires.

This Government is most anxious for a number of our Representatives and Senators to make a visit to England and France, not really for any specific legislative conference, although the invitation may take that form, but for personal interchanges of experience. It is a common saying in England that even no Englishman can really understand the war and its problems who has not made a visit to France. I recall that I was forcibly struck with Bryce's confession to this effect, after he had come back from France. It is on this principle—that it is well for American legislators to get as vivid an idea as possible—that the British are eager for a number of them to come. I agree with them.

The abandonment of Riga, it is feared here, will mean the German occupation of Petrograd, and that will mean the getting of more supplies from Russia and the getting of men, too, for all sorts of labour—will mean, in fact, the prolongation of the war. The German spirit, in spite of hunger, can be kept up by such a land victory and by the continued submarine success for Heaven knows how long; and these German successes seem to point to the slow and murderous necessity of whipping the German Army, lock, stock, and barrel. That, with our help, is only a question of time. But within that time the sickening loss of life will continue. But for the falling down of Russia and the psychological effect of the submarine campaign I should have a very lively hope of the German collapse before the coming winter is gone. The public and the Government here set high expectations on your embargo.

Take your actions all together—from the Conscription Act to the embargo—what a record that is! Of course, it has saved the Allied cause, which would otherwise have been lost, in great measure if not wholly. And the British know that and freely say so. This in itself is a conquest over British "arrogance" which makes us henceforth the masters of the English-speaking world.

Lord Reading again goes to the United States—on the ship that carries this. He goes on a general financial errand, the details of which I do not know—further than the necessity of coming to some concrete understanding. So far as I can find out, the British use their money well (allowing, of course, for the waste of war from which every nation suffers); but they seem to me to be awkward and careless and then suddenly panic-stricken in their large dealings with us to procure money. The financial conferences to which they have invited me seemed to me like a voyage through mist till you suddenly come to a great fall. I have prayed them to be definite before they become panic-stricken. "The Ambassador is quite right," exclaims the Prime Minister. We then adjourn till the next scare comes; and then the same journey is taken again—to the same Nowhere.

Yours very faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

Serious as the submarine situation was, there was another matter that, in Mr. Balfour's eyes, was even more alarming; that was the condition of Allied finances. That the Allies were seriously pressed for dollars to cover their purchases in the United States is no secret. Yet the expressions which British statesmen used, in conversation with Page and in their own official papers, are fairly startling. On June 28th Page was asked to meet Mr. Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Balfour, Lord Curzon, and others to discuss the impending crisis. The immediate difficulty was the assumption, by the United States, of British obligations to J. P. Morgan and Company, amounting to $400,000,000. This item is always described in the correspondence of the two countries as the "Morgan overdraft." While this expression is accurate enough, it must be remembered that the English use of the banking word "overdraft" is somewhat different from the American, and does not carry the odious meaning attached to it in this country. The British had not "overdrawn" their account in the American sense of the term. The firm of J. P. Morgan had made advances to the British Government of not far from $400,000,000; that is, in reality the "overdraft" partook rather the nature of a loan. The time had arrived for settlement. The Balfour Commission to the United States had taken up this "overdraft" with Mr. McAdoo in June, 1917, and had left the country with the belief that it was to be paid out of the money obtained in the first Liberty Loan. Mr. McAdoo, however, insisted that no such promise had been made. The incident had led to a painful misunderstanding, and the meeting with Page and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was held in the hope of reaching a definite agreement. At the same time the whole financial plight of the Allies was discussed—a plight which Mr. Balfour himself described as the "brink of the precipice." It is a revelation also that on June 28, 1917, Great Britain had enough money in the United States to keep up exchange "for only one day more."

Telegram to the President

London, June 28, 1917.

Secretary of State,
Washington.
Greatest Urgency.

Wholly confidential for the President and the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Balfour asked me to a conference at seven o'clock with him, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and their financial advisers. It was disclosed that financial disaster to all the European Allies is imminent unless the United States Government advances to the British enough money to pay for British purchases in the United States as they fall due.

Bonar Law reports that only half enough has been advanced for June and that the British agents in the United States now have enough money to keep the exchange up for only one day more. If exchange with England fall exchange with all European allies also will immediately fall, and there will be a general collapse. Balfour understood that in addition to our other loans and our loans to France and Italy, we would advance to England enough to pay for all purchases by the British Government made in the United States. He authorizes me to say that they are now on the brink of a precipice, and unless immediate help be given financial collapse will follow. He is sending an explanatory telegram to Spring Rice.

I am convinced that these men are not overstating their case. Unless we come to their rescue we are all in danger of disaster. Great Britain will have to abandon the gold standard.

PAGE.

To the President

29 June, 1917, London.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The financial panic (it's hardly less) that this Government has raises the question, Why on earth do the British drift along till they reach a precipice? That's hard to answer. It's their way. They are too proud to acknowledge their predicament even to themselves until events force them to do so. Mr. Balfour informs me that the agreement that he reached in general terms with Mr. McAdoo was this—that our Government would thenceforth lend (1) to France and Italy (and Russia?) the sums they would otherwise have to borrow from England (as they have all the while been borrowing) and (2) in addition lend to England whatever sums should be required to pay for British Government purchases in the United States. So much for that. I have no information whether that is Mr. McAdoo's understanding.

Now, Bonar Law assured me at the fearful financial conference to which they invited me that the Treasury Department had given Lever (the English financial agent) only half enough in June to meet the British Government's bills in the United States. Since they had reckoned on meeting all such bills from advances made by us, they find themselves unable to go further without our help. They have used all the gold they have in Canada. This, then, is the edge of the precipice. It came out that, a few weeks ago, the French came over here and persuaded the British that in addition to the French loan from the United States they were obliged to have the

British loans to them continued—for how long, I do not know. Bonar Law said, "We simply *had* to do it." The British, therefore, in spite of our help to France, still have France on their back and continue to give her money. I know that for a long time the British have felt that the French were not making a sufficient financial effort for themselves. "A Frenchman will lightly give his life for any cause that touches his imagination, but he will die rather than give a franc for any cause." There is a recurring fear here lest France in a moment of war-weariness may make a separate peace.

As things stand to-day, there is a danger of the fall of exchange and (perhaps) the abandonment of specie payments. These British run right into such a crisis before they are willing to confess their plight even to themselves.

They are not trying to lie down on us: they are too proud for that. Why they got into this predicament I do not fully know. I know nothing of what arrangements were made with them except what Mr. Balfour tells me. It seems to me that some definite understanding ought to have been reduced to writing. But here they are in this predicament, which I duly reported by telegram.

It is unlucky that "crises" come in groups—two or three at once. But the submarine situation is as serious as the financial. I have a better knowledge of that than I have of the financial situation. But in one respect they are alike—the British drive ahead, concealing their losses, their misfortunes, and their mistakes till they are on the very brink of disaster: that is their temperament. Into this submarine peril (the Germans are fast winning in this crucial activity—there's no doubt about that) I have gone pretty thoroughly with their naval men and their shipping authorities. Admiral Sims has reached the same conclusions that I have reached—independently, from his point of view. The immediate grave danger for the present lies here. If the present rate of destruction of shipping goes on, the war will end before a victory is won. And time is of the essence of the problem; and the place where it will be won is in the waters of the approach to this Kingdom—not anywhere else. The full available destroyer power that can by any method be made available must be concentrated in this area within weeks (not months). There are not in the two navies half destroyers enough: improvised destroyers must be got. There must be enough to provide convoys for every ship that is worth saving. Merely arming them affords the minimum of protection. Armed merchantmen are destroyed every day. Convoyed ships escape—almost all. That is the convincing actual experience.

If we had not come into the war when we did, and if we had not begun action and given help with almost miraculous speed, I do not say that the British would have been actually beaten (tho' this may have followed), but I do say that they would have quickly been on a paper money basis, thereby bringing down the financial situation of all the European Allies; and the submarine success of the Germans would or might have caused a premature peace. They were in worse straits than they ever confessed to themselves. And now we are all in bad straits because of this submarine destruction of shipping. One sea-going tug now may be worth more than a dozen ships next year.

Yours very faithfully,
Walter H. Page.

Mr. McAdoo, in his discussion of the financial situation, differed somewhat with British representatives in Washington. He declared that neither he nor any other responsible American official had promised to pay the "Morgan overdraft" out of the proceeds of the first Liberty Loan, and insisted that before making such engagements the American Government must have rather more information about British finances and British purchases in the United States. He also expressed himself as rather confused by the number of Englishmen in the United States who professed to represent the British Government and was especially puzzled by Lord Northcliffe's presence. "We have every desire," he wrote, "to be friendly and obliging. We have given conclusive evidence of this, but in order to avoid future misunderstanding it would be wise to have it understood that nothing shall be considered as agreed to until signed memoranda or documents have been exchanged." What especially hurt the feelings of the British, however, was Mr. McAdoo's remark that "America's coöperation cannot mean that America can assume the entire cost of financing the war." This statement, and the difficulties arising from the general situation, led Mr. Bonar Law to frame a memorandum for Page, which succinctly describes Great Britain's financial efforts since August, 1914, and sets forth with the utmost frankness the conditions that prevailed when the United States came to the rescue. It is therefore a document of great historic importance, and was immediately sent by Page to Washington.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer to Page

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has seen Mr. Page July 14th and would be much obliged if Mr. Secretary Balfour would cause the following note in reply to be communicated to Mr. Page. The Chancellor of the Exchequer of course accepts Mr. McAdoo's statement that "At no time, directly or indirectly, has the Secretary of the Treasury or any one connected with his Department promised to pay the Morgan overdraft." In any event, this question of past misunderstandings is of small consequence as compared with the question as to whether the financial interests of the alliance make this repayment necessary or advisable at the present time. But in view of what passed at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's interview with Mr. Page, the Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks it right to quote the actual words received by cable from Sir C. Spring Rice on April 9th which were the foundation of what he said on that occasion. Spring Rice telegraphed: "Sir R. Crawford desires the following to be communicated to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I told the Secretary of the Treasury last night that you appreciated and concurred in his proposals. He was very gratified and asked me to convey his compliments. I mentioned to him the four considerations referred to in paragraph two of your telegram. He agreed that repayment of overdraft on four hundred million dollars would be a first call on the loan. . . . This morning Governor Harding called, at the request of the Secretary, and confirmed the views expressed by the latter on the above points. This evening I went over the matter again with the Counsellor of the State Department, who fully concurred that our overdraft should be a first charge." There are several indications in Mr. McAdoo's note that he desires above all a fuller and freer communication of facts on our part. We have never desired or intended to keep any reserves from him as to our financial position. On the other hand, it has been our preoccupation to bring home to him exactly what that position is. Any specific question we will answer. In the meantime the following figures are presented in the belief that they are the figures most relevant to present issues:

(A) Mr. McAdoo points out: "That America's coöperation cannot mean that America can assume the entire burden of financing the war." How much less than this has been expressly asked of it is exemplified in the following table of assistance rendered to the European Allies by the United States and the United Kingdom respectively since the date of the entry of America into the war.

Financial assistance from April first to July fourteenth, nineteen hundred and seventeen:

Advanced by United Kingdom to France £56,037,000 sterling; to Russia, £78,472,000; to Italy, £47,760,000; to Belgium, including Congo, £8,035,000; to minor Allies, £3,545,000. Total, £193,849,000 sterling.

Advanced by United States [to France] $310,000,000; [to Russia] nil; [to Italy] $100,000,000; [to Belgium] $15,000,000; [to minor Allies] $2,000,000; total, $427,000,000, equals pounds sterling, ninety million.

The advances by the United States equal, roughly, £90,000,000 against the advances by the United Kingdom of nearly £194,000,000. Russia has been promised $100,000,000 but it is understood that she has not yet received any cash installments. For Belgian relief total amounts promised $45,000,000; Serbia total amount promised $3,000,000.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer gratefully acknowledges that the United States Treasury have advanced $686,000,000 to this country in addition to the above sums to the other Allies.

But he invites Mr. McAdoo's particular attention to the fact that even since America came into the war the financial assistance afforded to the other Allies by the United Kingdom has been more than double the assistance afforded them by the United States, and that the assistance the United

Kingdom has afforded these other Allies much exceeds the assistance she has herself received from the United States.

(B) The United States Treasury have so far limited their assistance to expenditure incurred by the Allies within the United States, rightly recognizing that such assistance involves a much less onerous burden than a financial assistance abroad. The United Kingdom have been unable to adopt this attitude toward their Allies but have supported the burden of their expenditure in all parts of the world. Without this support the Allies would have been unable to obtain the supplies of food and munitions which have been essential to their prosecution of the war.

To such an extent has the above been the case that up to the present time, the United Kingdom is still financing the expenditure of Russia in the United States.

(C) The total expenditure out of the British Exchequer between April first, nineteen hundred and seventeen, and July fourteenth, nineteen hundred and seventeen, amounted to £825,109,000 sterling, of which pounds sterling £131,245,000 was met from loans raised in the United States. Both these figures relate to expenditure and income brought to account out of date fourteenth.

(D) The financial burden upon the Exchequer of the United Kingdom did not begin, however, on April first last. The total expenditure between April first, 1914, and March 31st, 1917, amounted to £4,362,798,000 sterling which added to the expenditure of £825,109,000 sterling since April first, 1917, makes a total expenditure of £5,161,471,000 sterling. It is after having supported an expenditure of this magnitude for three years that the United Kingdom venture to appeal to the United States of America for sympathetic consideration in financial discussion where the excessive urgency of her need and the precariousness of her position may somewhat impart a tone of insistence to her requests for assistance which would be out of place in ordinary circumstances.

A statement is appended at the end of this note for Mr. McAdoo's information showing precisely how this sum of five billion pounds has been financed up to date. The proceeds of the overdraft in New York are included under the heading of the ways and means advances. This statement included several particulars which have not been communicated to Parliament and is to be regarded, like all the other figures cited in this note, as being only for the confidential information of the United States Government.

(E) The following statement shows the expenditure and receipts of the British Government in New York from the first April to the fourteenth July nineteen hundred and seventeen.

Payments out of the treasury account in New York for the purchase of commodities and interest due, $602,000,000.

Purchase of exchange (e. g., the cost of all wheat purchases for Allies) is included in this figure *inter alia* during the greater part of the period in question) $529,000,000, total $1,131,000,000.

Loans from United States Government, $685,000,000.

British treasury notes (sundry munitions contracts), $27,000,000.

Repayments by French and Italian governments, $134,000,000.

Gold, $246,000,000.

Sale of securities, $58,000,000; miscellaneous, $19,000,000; total, $1,169,000,000.

(F) It will be seen from the preceding statement that gold and securities were realized during the period in question (for the most part during June) to the extent of $304,000,000. The impossibility of the United Kingdom's continuing to supplement American government assistance on this scale is shown by the following facts.

Gold. We have exported to the United States since the commencement of the war (including gold lately earmarked for the New York Federal Reserve Bank) a sum of $305,000,000 in actual gold. This has all been sent on behalf of the United Kingdom, but a considerable part has been borrowed or purchased from the other Allies. In addition a fairly substantial amount has been despatched to other destinations. This represents an enormous effort of which the reserves of the United States have obtained the benefit.

The United Kingdom now have left about £50,000,000 in the Bank of England's reserve, £28,500,000 in the currency note reserve, and an unknown amount estimated at a maximum of £50,000,000 with the joint stock banks. In addition there is a sum of about £10,000,000 at the disposal of the Treasury but not included in any published reserve. This makes a total of about £140,000,000. There are virtually no government bonds in circulation. This is about six per cent. of our banking liabilities and considerably less than allotted circulation of the government bonds in the United States.

The amount of this government loan which we could part with, without destroying the confidence upon which our credit rests, is inconsiderable.

Securities. Before the Treasury initiated their official mobilization of dollar securities large amounts were disposed of through private channels and also by the Bank of England, who were systematically engaged in the disposal of Dutch government securities in New York.

The following figures relate only to the treasury scheme: value of securities purchased, $770,000,000; value of securities obtained on deposit as a loan, $1,130,000,000.

Total, $1,900,000,000. The above has been disposed of as follows: Sold in New York, $750,000,000; deposited as security against loans, $600,000,000; deposited as security against call loan, $400,000,000; still in hand, $150,000,000; total, $1,900,000,000 (all figures approximate). We have now obtained virtually all the dollar securities available in this country and, in view of penalties now attached, it is believed that the amount of saleable securities still in private hands is now of very small dimensions. The balance in hand can only be disposed of gradually and is not in any case an important amount.

In short, our resources available for payments in America are exhausted. Unless the United States Government can meet in full our expenses in America, including exchange, the whole financial fabric of the alliance will collapse. This conclusion will be a matter not of months but of days.

The question is one of which it is necessary to take a large view. If matters continue on the same basis as during the last few weeks a financial disaster of the first magnitude cannot be avoided. In the course of August the enemy will receive the encouragement of which he stands in so great need, at the moment of the war when perhaps he needs it most.

Mr. McAdoo suggests that the settlement of joint allied purchasing arrangements must precede any promises from him of financial support in August. His Majesty's Government do not know how to interpret this statement. They are doing what they can to promote the establishment of such arrangements and at the end of June prepared a detailed scheme, on lines which they had been given to understand would commend themselves to the United States Government, for submission to the other Allies, but the settlement depends upon the progress of events in America and the acquiescence of the other Allies concerned. They will instruct Sir C. Spring Rice to communicate unofficially the details to the United States Government immediately without waiting for replies from the other Allies. His Majesty's Government cannot believe that, if these or other natural and unavoidable causes of delay are operative for reasons which may be out of their control, financial support will be withheld and a catastrophe precipitated.

As regards Mr. McAdoo's concluding passage, the Chancellor of the Exchequer desires to say that Lord Northcliffe is the duly authorized representative of His Majesty's Government to conduct all financial negotiations on their behalf. Lord Northcliffe has, however, suggested that the United States Government would themselves prefer that someone with political experience such as an ex-cabinet member should be asked to cross to the United States for the purpose of dealing with the financial situation. If this is the desire of the United States Government, His Majesty's Government would gladly comply with it.

To the Secretary of State

London, August 2, 1917.

SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington.
August 2, 3 P. M. Confidential for the Secretary and President only.

Mr. Balfour has gone over with me the telegram he sent July thirty to Spring Rice for McAdoo about exchange. He represents the position as most perilous. He hopes that the President has seen it and will cause a reply to be sent at earliest possible time.

PAGE.

These documents make clear the financial disaster from which the United States saved the Allies, for, in a brief time, all difficulties and misunderstandings were adjusted, and American advances, to the extent of nearly $12,000,000,000, went with clock-like regularity to support the great cause.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST LETTERS

OF ALL the utterances of President Wilson, probably the answer to Pope Benedict XV, in August, 1917, gave Page the greatest satisfaction. His Holiness had appealed to the warring powers to cease their battles, to restore the political conditions of Europe as they had existed before 1914, and to settle outstanding problems on the basis of arbitration, general condonation, and Christian charity. President Wilson, paying due respect to the source from which the proposal came, rejected it in words that sped like lightning through two hemispheres and put a new spirit into the efforts of the Allies. "The object of the war," said the President, "is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment, controlled by an irresponsible government, which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry the plan out without regard either to the sacred obligations of treaty or the long-established practices and long-cherished principles of international action and honour, which chose its own time for the war, delivered its blow fiercely and suddenly, stopped at no barrier, either of law or of mercy; swept a whole continent within the tide of blood—not the blood of soldiers only, but the blood of innocent women and of children also, and of the helpless poor; and now stands, balked but not defeated, the enemy of four fifths of the world." It was an eloquent description of the origin of the war and the spirit with which Germany had waged hostilities and one can imagine Page's pleasure in reading it. Nor would it have been more than human nature had he felt a personal gratification. For the President's interpretation was precisely the one that Page had been setting forth for three years. From the day the Germans invaded Belgium, the Ambassador, in letter after letter, had described the object of the war, as the deliverance "of the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment, controlled by an irresponsible government." The necessary conclusion, in the President's reply—that the United States, in making peace, should have no negotiations with the Hohenzollern government, but would insist on dealing only with the responsible representatives of the German people—was a plan which Page would naturally approve.

"As I promptly telegraphed you," Page wrote in reference to this message, "and as, of course, you have heard through many channels, your reply to the Pope received a most enthusiastic welcome here, not only because it meets with universal approval: there's a deeper reason than that. It expresses definitely the moral and the deep and clear political reason for the war—the freeing of the world, including the German people, from the German military autocracy; and it expresses this better and with more force than it has ever been expressed by anybody on this side the world. You have made acceptable peace-terms clearer, not only to the enemy, but also to the Allies, than they have ever before been made known. All these nations here have so many relatively unimportant and so many purely selfish aims that their minds run on. Here you come setting forth the one big thing worth fighting for—the one big moral and political aim—no revenge, no mere boundary rectifications, no subsidiary thing to confuse the main purpose. This gives moral leadership to the whole war; and the British know and feel this."

To the President

London, Sept. 25, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

There has, I think, been no other stroke so effective—apart from our coming into the war—as your firm announcement in your letter to the Pope that we cannot deal with the present government of Germany unless satisfactory guarantees are given directly by the German people. This had been said here but never, I think, said with official sanction and surely never with convincing force. Now that *you* have said it, it takes precedence over every other formula of necessary demands. It is, of course, *the* necessary demand, the necessary condition of peace. It has had a tremendous effect upon British opinion and British resolution.

And so far as I can judge, its effect in Germany has been and continues to be supreme. The violence with which it is resented and the mobilization of official opinion against it tell the story. It is worth more than the winning of a dozen great battles.

Of course, it means far more coming from you than it could be made to mean coming from any subject of a "crowned" republic. The "crowned" is the trouble. Then, too, the British do not trust even the German people. Neither do I, for that matter. But this is not directly to the point. For no popular government—even of a nation wholly depraved and villainous, if there were such a nation—could ever get the power or develop the will to play the German Government's rôle. I can't judge what chance there is of a revolution in Germany, but, if there be a chance, your declaration strengthens it and if there have hitherto been no chance, your declaration suggests it. Besides, it has planted firmly in the minds of all the Allies the real aim of the war. Everything else is secondary to this aim.

Of course, your declaration is only part and parcel of the commanding influence of all that you say; and whatever you say goes further home both in Germany and among the Allies than all things that all other men say.

The British are full not only of gratitude but of admiration of the way we go about the task; and their curiosity to know all that we are doing is pathetic. I have just come, for instance, from lunch with Mr. Asquith and Mr. Winston Churchill, who talked and asked about nothing but our preparations. They have both been in France very lately and they are full of praise of what they saw and heard of our Expeditionary Force. They freely acknowledge that an undesirable peace would have been forced on the Allies by this time if we had not come in. So, too, did M. Schneider, the French Krupp, who was at this luncheon. The same frank confession comes out everywhere now. It was freely spoken, for instance, the other day when Balfour, Geddes, and Jellicoe, and I talked for two hours.

I wish it were possible for some proper person to come here—a good public speaker—who could explain in some detail and somewhat officially just what we are doing and how we are doing it in the United States. The curiosity of the British Government and public is insatiable and their admiration unbounded.

I have heard nothing more about the reported naval misunderstanding[1] than I telegraphed a few days ago after my long conference with Balfour, Geddes, and Jellicoe. They are much disturbed and they evidently think that some mischiefmaker is at work. They protest that they have been perfectly frank and have opened all doors of information to us and given the profoundest consideration to every suggestion and request that has come from us, and that still they hear of dissatisfaction at Washington. I suspect that they have a fear lest Pollen,[1] a British writer and lecturer on naval subjects, now in the United States, has been stirring up trouble. It seems that the Admiralty and the Navy here have never been able to please Pollen or to win his approval. Whether my guess about Pollen be correct or not, something is wrong in fact or in gossip. They are very eager for Admiral Benson himself to come here. I asked Jellicoe why he didn't go to Washington, and his reply was: "The problem itself is here. I wish the head of your naval staff himself to see that we withhold nothing. If *he* understand it, no trouble can come from subordinates."

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[1] The reference is to a report which had reached Washington, that the British naval authorities were not dealing fairly with the American Navy and were concealing information.

Geddes, by the way, the new First Lord of the Admiralty, is making a very favourable impression on the Government and on public opinion; and I think deservedly and properly. He is an extraordinarily forcible man. He ran away when a boy and worked in a saw-mill camp in West Virginia. Subsequently he had a valuable and (I think) quite extensive experience in railroad work in the United States and learned American railroad management. The result was that he worked his way, when he came back here, into the chief manager's place of one of the big English railways, and made a great reputation as a manager of men—as a man of great force who brings things to pass. A year or so ago he was put in charge of the big transportation problem of the British in France—against the wishes of the army commanders. He went there with their prejudice against him, but he completely won their approval and their warm praise by the way he did the job. They made him a Brigadier-General. When Lloyd George concluded that he wanted the utmost push in the Admiralty, he made Geddes First Lord. This required that he should be a member of Parliament. The member for Cambridge resigned to make room for him and Geddes was elected in his place. Then they made him an Admiral. Some wag remarked that next week they'd probably make Geddes Archbishop! It was a new experience to take a civilian railroad manager—a man who has no politics that anybody ever heard of and who has had no political experience and who didn't even know many of the political figures or managers—and give him one of the very foremost Cabinet positions. When he took office those who did not feel some prejudice against him at least looked at him with a question mark. Already he has won the confidence and enthusiasm of his associates, as he did of the army officers in France.

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[1] Mr. Arthur H. Pollen, a severe critic of the Admiralty.

I have seen a good deal of him, and there is no doubt of his clear head, his sound judgment, and his most uncommon energy and directness. One nickname they have for him is "The Yank." If I had to bet, I'd bet on him. I don't for a moment believe that this fellow will play any tricks on us or on anybody else. I should say that he now has only one aim in life and that is to win the war and to make the Navy do its utmost to win it.

Every ship now brings special men sent by many departments of our Government to get information—army men, naval men, aircraft men, Red Cross men; and after I have put them into the proper channels, I try to follow every one of them and to ask if they've got all they came for. They all report the most courteous treatment and success in their quests. Several departments of the British Government have volunteered the request that I have them promptly informed if any accredited Americans fail to receive what they ask for.

We are fast accumulating war trophies from the air raids on London. Pieces of shells—from the British anti-aircraft guns—fell on my roof last night during the half-hour battle. We were at dinner and we concluded that it was as well to be hit with full stomachs as with empty ones. So we finished the meal about the time the battle ended. During these moonlit evenings we receive an attack every night—always, of course, with loss of life greater than the newspapers are allowed to report. Two bombs fell last night within a few hundred yards of Buckingham Palace and two more still nearer the Houses of Parliament. But it is hard to believe that the German airmen knew just what buildings they came near hitting. The guns at least keep them at a great height. A fortnight ago a bomb wrecked a street so near my house that two or three seconds difference would have caused it to fall on the square where I live—two or three seconds difference in the time of its release from the aëroplane. We are, therefore, now literally in the war. We pay singularly little attention to it—one gets used to it—and there are, after all, singularly few casualties—about twenty people killed and seventy-five hurt every time. We expect a raid and a battle every night while the moon lasts.

But this is an incident of the war unworthy of mention.

Believe me, Mr. President,
Yours faithfully,
Walter H. Page.

The few remaining letters, written at long intervals, require no comment.

To the President

London, 22 December, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . The Lansdowne[1] letter was used as an occasion to demand a clearer and simpler explanation of the aims of the war. I do not quite see how such a demand—which itself is one evidence of a weary depression—can be satisfied by thumb-nail catch phrases. Mr. Balfour, as I dare say you have read, declared in the House of Commons two nights ago that your recent speeches and letters were as able as any state papers produced in the whole history of the world. Everybody points to them as the preëminent formulation of war aims, and yet the cry continues here for some summary that the man in the street and the man in the trenches can understand. All this will pass with the New Year mood.

But there is one thing that I wish the British would themselves say more plainly and concretely—that the only way to security is to overthrow the German military autocracy, so as to show that this implies at least the unhorsing of the Emperor. I should not say positively that the dynastic principle prevents. But it has something to do with preventing a clear cry. Almost everywhere in Europe—everywhere outside of France and Switzerland—men seem yet unable to think of government without kings. Something of the old divinity doth yet hedge them. Even in England there is a hesitancy to speak out plainly about crowned villains. The Tsar himself found much sympathy here in certain circles. The vague fear lest royalty here may come upon an evil day shows itself by irrelevant and unnecessary outbursts in praise of the King; and the argument is overworked that a throne is necessary to hold the Empire together. . . . . .

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[1] A letter written by Lord Lansdowne, on November 29, 1917, and published in the *Daily Telegraph*. It contended that the war had lasted too long, and was generally criticized as favouring an unsatisfactory peace.

With all good wishes,
Yours faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President

London, January 16, 1918.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

You know Lord Reading[1] and have taken measure of him, but the following facts and gossip may interest you: He is one of the ablest Englishmen living—everybody concedes that. See and compare the view taken of Disraeli, the other Hebrew Earl, by his political enemies. As between the two my judgment would be in favour of Reading. He is not so spectacular as old Dizzy was, but he is far sounder. I doubt if Dizzy was honest, and Reading is. He is one of the most brilliant and able members of the Bar. He has himself told me that he worked for years from early hours to early hours again day in and day out—a prodigy of industry. He became skilful, especially in financial cases, and his fees were prodigious.

Lord Reading does not give up the Lord Chief Justiceship. He remarked to me the other day that his Ambassadorship would be temporary. Lady Reading told Mrs. Page that they expected to be gone only three months. But I take it that he will not return till the end of the war.

I have reason to believe (although I do not know) that an effort was made to induce Mr. Balfour and then Lord Grey to go as Ambassador to Washington. I know that the appointment was offered to Northcliffe. He didn't care to be away from London so long lest he should lose his grip on the general management of things, which in his inmost soul he thinks he holds and which, to a degree, he does hold. The belief, moreover, is widespread that he may become Prime Minister if Lloyd George should not last till peace come. I think there is no doubt that to do a concrete job Lord Reading will succeed, during war time, better than any man who was considered for the post. But if when the war is over Lord Grey should go, we should have the best possible representative of English tradition and English character. Yet I think he never will, although he is going after the war to deliver lectures at Yale and elsewhere.

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[1] Lord Reading had recently been appointed British Ambassador to the United States.

Of course, the immediate problems to be met in the relations of the two Governments will continue to be financial—till we have to slacken our pace. The British, God knows, need money, but God knows also that they are not slow in making their wants known. I doubt if anybody, but the Germans, will ever wage war on less than twice what it ought to cost. But, if it could be more extravagantly conducted than they (the British) conduct it, I can't imagine how it could be done.

There is going on a visit to the United States on the invitation of some of our ecclesiastical organizations the Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable His Grace the Lord Archbishop of York whose name (which is never used) is Cosmo Gordon Lang, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., D.Litt. &c., &c., &c.—and he signs his name Cosmo Ebor. He comes of Scotch-Irish stock. He is the best representative of the best English clerical life—a simple, humble, learned, right-minded man of charm and fine manners and fine feeling.

He is most eager to meet you and you will enjoy him. Of course his proper approach (he's a Peer Spiritual) is through his Ambassador. To mortals of humble rank, such as President Eliot, I have given him letters. The Archbishop at one end of the line and Reading at the other—they make good representatives of Notable England.

There is a very general uneasiness here about the expected offensive by the Germans in France, for the feeling is that they are willing to sacrifice their whole army for Paris or Calais and that they are going to make their most desperate effort regardless of the cost in men or in anything else. How true this is everybody can guess for himself. But it seems probable, to say the least. Their chance is better than it will be after we get a great trained army in France. There is a sense, too, in which such a decisive effort will be welcomed here. Nothing is printed and little is said in public about the constant danger of labour troubles in this Kingdom, but such a danger has always to be taken into account. The Briton, nobleman or labourer, is not going to give out or give up, but it costs him more and more in money and in anxiety to keep his whole force in the field, in the factory, in the mine, and on the land, going at full strength, than it would cost but for this constant labour burden.

"After the War" hasn't come yet. But I recall a remark that Edward Grey made to me before the war, that Labour would in a decade control many governments. A frequent prediction now made here by well-informed Englishmen is that it will control the government of Great Britain. The Labour Party is already playing for supremacy.

It's a quieter, sadder, more serious time and mood than we have before had in England. Everybody feels that we are approaching great and perhaps decisive events; and they all thank God for the United States and its President.

Yours very heartily,
Walter H. Page.

There certainly could be no more appropriate conclusion to this series than the following letter, which probably sets forth as eloquently as it has ever been set forth the spirit that made inevitable Allied victory:

To the President

London, March 7, 1918.

Dear Mr. President:

The complete break-down of Russia and the present German occupation of so much of that Empire as she wants, together with the surrender of Rumania, have had a very strong effect on both sections of public opinion here as I interpret the British mind. In the enormously dominant section these untoward events have stiffened the war resolution. They say that Germany must now be whipped to a finish. Else she will have doubled her territory, got raw materials and food, probably opened a way to Asia, strengthened the Turks, and will hold the peoples of her new territory as vassals—to exploit them and their lands in preparation for another war for further conquests. The war lord will be more firmly seated than before. Only if her armies be literally whipped will the German military caste be thrown out of power. This probably means a very long war yet.

The minority section of opinion—so far as I can judge, it is a small minority—has the feeling that such a decisive military victory cannot be won; that the enemies of Germany, allowing her to keep her Eastern gains, must soon make the best bargain they can in the West. Of course this plan would leave the German military caste in power and would be a defeat for the Allies in so far as a fair chance for a permanent peace is concerned. It would leave at least European Russia to German mercy, and the Baltic and Black seas practically in German control.

Lord Lansdowne and his friends (how numerous they are nobody knows) are the loudest spokesmen for such a peace as might be made now, especially if Belgium can be restored and an agreement reached about Alsace-Lorraine. But it is talked much of in Asquith circles that the time may come when this policy (its baldness somewhat modified) may be led by Mr. Asquith. He has up to this time patriotically supported the Government. But he is very generally suspected of intrigue, and his friends openly predict that at what they regard as a favourable moment he will take his cue. I myself can hardly believe this. I do not believe that even a party political victory lies in that direction. But a virtual surrender to the Germans would, if this peace-plan should be successful.

The dominant section is sorely grieved about the present state of Russia. But they refuse to be discouraged by it. They recall how Napoleon overran the most of Europe and how the French held none of his conquests after his fall.

The danger that the present government is in here, comes, it seems to me, not mainly from the split in public opinion that I have described, but from the personal enemies of Mr. Lloyd George and his Government. They make the most of the dismissal of Jellicoe and of Robertson and of the appointment of Beaverbrook and Northcliffe and of the closeness of the Government to agitating newspapers—whether the newspapers run the Government or the Government runs the newspapers doesn't matter: they are, their enemies say, too closely intertwined.

It is certain that Lloyd George keeps power mainly if not solely because he is the most energetic man in sight. Many who support him do not like him personally. But nobody doubts his supreme earnestness to win the war, and everybody holds that this is the only task now worth while. This feeling has saved him in both recent political "crises." After the last one, he remarked to me with an exultant manner: "They don't seem to want anybody else—yet, do they?" His dismissal of Robertson has been accepted in the interest of greater unity of military control, but that was a dangerous rapids he shot; for he didn't handle the boat very tactfully. The previous dismissal of Jellicoe has now just come up, rather bitterly, in the House of Commons. Whether these two incidents are quiescent, it is hard to tell. From the inside I hear that both were necessary because of the inability both of the great sailor and of the great soldier to work in administrative harness with other people. It may very well be true that the place for both is in fight, not in administration. Such surely was the case with Kitchener.

Yet there is a certain danger to the Government also because some of them are thought to be wearing out. Parliament itself—I mean the House of Commons—is thought to be going stale: it has had an enormously long life. The Prime Minister, though a tough and robust man, has increasingly frequent little breakdowns. Bonar Law seems and is very weary. Mr. Balfour's health is not uniformly robust, and his enemies call him old and languid. But, just when this criticism finds a voice, he makes a clearer statement than anybody else has made and the threatened storm passes. Still, the Government, like all other governments in Europe now, is overworked and tired.

But I believe British opinion to be sound, and British endurance is only having its first real test. The people here are forever accusing one another, especially those in authority, of weakness. They have always done so. It is a sort of national vice, which it is well to remember in all outbursts of dissatisfaction. I form my opinion from what I know and see of two opposite and widely separated sections of society. Labour—there has been grave trouble with Labour since the beginning of the war—in its recent manifesto stood quite firm and resolute. The "lower classes" are undoubtedly in favour of a fight to a finish. The Tommy is made of as good fighting material as there is in the world. He knows enough to be bulldoggish and not enough to have any philosophic doubts. I was much impressed a little while ago with the reasons that Lord Derby gave me for regarding the present British Army as the best that the world has ever seen. I reminded him, when he had enumerated his reasons, that all that he had said suggested to me that for those very reasons there would soon be a better army. He was gracious enough not to dispute my contention.

The aristocracy—the real aristocracy—too are plucky to the last degree. That's one virtue that they have supremely. They do not wince. They seem actually to remember the hard plight that Napoleon put them in. They licked him. Hence, they can lick anybody. The separation of this island from the Continent and the ancient mixture here of the breeds of men produced a kind of man that stands up in a fight—no doubt about that—whether he be a bejewelled and arrogant aristocrat and reactionary or a forgotten and neglected Hodge of the soil.

I was at a dinner of old Peers at the Athenæum Club—a group of old cocks that I meet once in a while and have come to know pretty well and ever to marvel at. I think every one is past seventy—several of them past eighty. On this occasion I was the only commoner present. The talk went on about every imaginable thing—reminiscences of Browning, the years of good vintages of port, the excellence of some court opinions handed down in the United States by quite obscure judges—why shouldn't they be got out of the masses of law reports and published as classics?—wouldn't it have been well if the King had gone and spent his whole time at the front and on the fleet,—what's an English King for anyhow?—then a defense of Reading; and why should the Attorney General or the Lord Chief Justice be allowed out of the Kingdom at all at such a time?

"Call in the chief steward. . . . Here, steward, what's that noise?"

"A hair raid, milord."

"How long has it been going on?"

"Forty minutes, milord."

"I must be deaf," said the old fellow, with an inquiring look at the company. Everybody else had heard it, but we've learned to take these things for granted and nobody had interrupted the conversation to speak of it. Then the old man spoke up again.

"Well, there's nothing we can do to protect His Excellency. Damn the air raid. Pass the port."

Then the talk went on about the ignorance and the commonness of modern British governments—most modern governments, in fact. French statesmen—most of 'em common fellows, and Italians and Germans—ach! What swine! "Think of that fellow Von Kühlmann.[1] I lent him a valuable book and the rogue never returned it. Did you know Kühlmann?"

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[1] An important member of the German Embassy in London under Prince Lichnowsky.

"But," turning to me, "you are to be congratulated. You have a *gentleman* for your President. How do you do it? That breed seems to be out of a job in most countries."

Not one of those old fellows drove to the club. They can't get gasoline and they have no horses. Nor can cabs be got after ten o'clock. When the firing and bomb dropping had ceased, the question arose whether it was safe to walk home. My car had come and I took five of them in it—one on the front with the driver. As each got out at his door he bade me an almost affectionate good-night. One of them said, "By our combined forces the God of our Fathers—not the barbarous Prussian Gott—will see us through."

There's no sham about these old masters of empire. They feel a proprietary interest in the King, in the Kingdom, in everything British. Every man of them had done some distinguished service and so have the sons of most of them; and at least half of them have lost grandsons or sons in the war, to which they never allude. An enemy might kill them if he could get to them, but change them or scare them or make them surrender—never. Take 'em all in all, for downright human interest, I don't know where you'd find their equals. Take them as mere phenomena of human society and of a social system—well, that's another story. But they, and their like, are not going to give up in this war.

Well, a little before that, I met once a week for three or four weeks at dinner about a dozen Labour leaders, who good-humouredly wrangled with one another and with me, they being of a disputatious turn. It's a pretty good world to them, on the whole; but economic society is organized with gross injustice and their misfortune is that they must set it right. On many things they can't agree with one another; but on one thing they are of like mind: the employer wasn't fair before the war and he isn't fair now. The war brings no reason to their minds why they should surrender. Let *him* surrender, rather. *But* they wouldn't desert the country. They'll beat the hog of an employer, but they'll keep up the war, and a larger measure of democracy will follow. Most of these men are keen-minded, able, pugnacious and, like all breeds of the John Bull stock, *tenacious*. They have a case—I'm disposed to think, a good case—which they urge most often by bad methods. They *will* have a larger measure of democracy. The first concrete form that it has taken is the new Franchise Act which doubles the number of voters. There is now an approximation to one vote for every man over twenty-one and for every woman over thirty. Other such concrete changes will come—perhaps a Labour government, certainly a Labour government if all Labour holds together. One of these fellows goes on a crutch from a war wound. They are not for a peace that will soon end in another war.

As I make it out, it is chiefly in political and philosophic circles that hopelessness finds a home. Lord Lansdowne belongs to both these groups, to one by temperament, the other by training. I ran across him a fortnight ago. He had, for an old man who is far from well, an almost unseemly gaiety of spirit, and he insisted on talking almost wholly about agriculture. I had sent to our Agricultural Department for certain of its publications, which greatly interested him. I almost forgive him his vagueness, cut bias of political thought because of his sound agricultural knowledge.

I set out to write you, Mr. President, more about our own affairs here rather than this weary stuff about the curious and admirable and stolid and eternally baffling carnivorous and amphibious animal that inhabits this island. But I'll tire you with a longer letter. Our own affairs here are, I think, going well—in most respects surely. The Embassy is war-weary in this sense—that the staff has one sick man—one after another—all the while. The London winter all indoors and the failure of some of the best workers to take exercise—that's the trouble; but it's not serious. A week on the South Shore sets the digestion going again.

I am trying to get together some information in an authoritative way which I hope will be useful to House in his preparation for the Peace Conference. It is an interesting task as well as baffling. And much of my time is taken in making sure that our several groups of people, such as the Shipping Board group, the War Trade Board group, etc., are getting on well with the several departments of the Government, as, up to this time, they have. The British try to play the game openly and gratefully.

My fears for our future dealings centre about trade jealousies.

Yours faithfully,
WALTER H. PAGE.

EPILOGUE

PAGE died at Pinehurst, North Carolina, December 21, 1918; the first two volumes of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" were published in October, 1922. In both the United States and Great Britain the disclosure of the great part he had played in the war and the literary charm and permanent historical value of his letters, made a deep impression. Americans recognized that in supporting the Allied cause from the beginning of the war, in constantly placing before President Wilson the great facts in the conflict, in insisting that the power of the United States should inevitably be used to bring about the defeat of the Central Empires, Page was preaching Americanism of the loftiest kind. Especially impressive was the recognition that the Ambassadorship and the policies and opinions it made vital merely formed the climax of a consistent career. With Page's past in his own country—with his interest in the democratic progress of the common man—any other attitude than that of allegiance to the Allied cause would have been unthinkable. Since his death several memorials, in this country and in England, have paid tribute to Page's services in several fields. The little town in which the future Ambassador was born, Cary, North Carolina, has named its institution for secondary education "The Walter H. Page High School"—an appropriate testimony to his struggles for popular instruction in the South. His college, Randolph-Macon, in Virginia, dedicated, in December, 1923, the "Walter Hines Page Library." North Carolina, the state which Page loved so well, but which at times had so misunderstood him—the old boyhood home to which his heart longingly turned in those last days in England, and to which, broken by his five years' Ambassadorship, he came back to die—has placed his portrait in the State Capitol at Raleigh—a replica of the painting, by Philip Laszlo, that hangs in the American Embassy in London.

A great school of international relations has been founded at Johns Hopkins University—the institution at which Page, from 1876 to 1878, was one of the first twenty Fellows. It had been Page's plan, on his return to the United States, to devote his life to improving relations between peoples—not only between the United States and Great Britain, but the United States and the whole world. "My fears for our future dealings," he writes in the last letter of the present book, "centre about trade jealousies." The sentence contains much to set his countrymen thinking. Many developments since the armistice give it especial point. How can these trade rivalries and other causes of international ill-health be prevented from precipitating an even greater calamity than that through which he lived? The proposed Walter Hines Page School of International Relations, with an endowment of $1,000,000, will seek the answer to this question. It will conduct elaborate studies in the field of international economics, communications, law, racial psychology, geography, diplomatic practice, and other subjects that closely concern war and peace. In years to come this school will thus accumulate a vast fund of information that should help the spread of that international good fellowship and democratic progress to which Page had proposed to devote his last years.

Great Britain has also paid tribute to the man who believed that in acting as her friend and the friend of the Allied cause he was best serving his own country and the world. Soon after the publication of the Page biography, the following letter, signed by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, three former Prime Ministers, and a former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs appeared in the London *Times:*

SIR:

The publication of the two admirably edited volumes of "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" has revealed to the world a personality and a record of achievement of which perhaps only those who came into intimate social and official contact with him during the term of his Ambassadorship in this country were already aware.

In these "Letters" Mr. Page lives again. They give the clearest and widest expression we can ever now hope to receive of his vivid, free-ranging mind and of that mellow integrity of character and abounding humanity which endeared him to us all. More particularly, they show him to have been one of the best friends that Great Britain ever had, and a far-seeing and practical crusader in the cause of Anglo-American coöperation.

In the difficult period of the war, before the United States had entered it, and when many contentious issues inevitably arose between the British and American Governments, it was Mr. Page's handling of these issues, as much as any other factor, that kept them within the bounds of reason and good temper. Scrupulous, as an Ambassador should be, in presenting his country's case with all the vigour and persuasiveness at his command, Mr. Page's conduct of the negotiations entrusted to him was informed throughout by his native courtesy, humour, and straightforwardness; by a quick understanding of the nature of the European struggle; and by an intensity of sympathy for the Allied cause and of admiration for Great Britain's part in it which was irrepressible. He was the happiest, the most liberated, man in Europe when America entered the war.

For all that Mr. Page contributed toward that supreme development, by smoothing away friction and minimizing and removing difficulties and misunderstandings, this country, no less than his own, owes him an inestimable debt. There must, moreover, be many hundreds of our people who used his services and those of his most efficient staff to inquire after the fate of relatives at the fronts, and who drew freely and gratefully on his exhaustless stock of sympathy, patience, and promptitude.

There is nothing in Great Britain to mark the fact that Mr. Page lived here for five years as United States Ambassador, and that in a great crisis he served his own country and ours, and civilization itself, with a noble competence. We desire to repair that omission. We confidently invite subscriptions to perpetuate a name and services that can never be thought of, on either side of the Atlantic, without deep affection and gratitude.

We are, Sir, &c.,

A. Bonar Law
Balfour
H. H. Asquith
D. Lloyd George
Grey of Fallodon

The response from all classes of British life was immediate. The opinion was unanimous that there was only one place in Great Britain for a memorial to Page: that was Westminster Abbey. On July 3, 1923, a gathering which completely filled the ancient structure attended services in memory of the Ambassador. A few minutes before this service, Mrs. Walter H. Page, the Ambassador's widow, and other members of the Page family, gathered with the Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Mr. H. H. Asquith, Mr. Winston Churchill, Lord Lansdowne, and others, in the Chapter House of the Abbey, to unveil a marble tablet in Page's honour. The following remarks were made by Lord Grey:

The tablet that is to be unveiled to-day is in memory of one whose every word and act in great place were inspired by single-minded and earnest desire to make human freedom, as he saw it realized in democracy, prevail among the nations of the world. Walter Hines Page was an example of the truth that the strongest personalities are the outcome not so much of striving for personal success or fame, as of patriotism and of faith in an ideal. His patriotism was of the noblest kind; he loved his country both for what it was and for what he believed it could and would do for the benefit of mankind. His perception of the power of the United States, his belief in its democracy, his absolute and never-faltering trust in the will of its people to do great things and good things for the world, were part of his very being.

Surely it must be a proud as well as a happy thought for his country to remember that it inspired a faith so high in a mind so keen and pure.

I have spoken first of Walter Hines Page as an American because that is how, I am sure, he would have wished us to speak of him and to think of him; but it was very near his heart that there should be between his country and ours true knowledge and understanding each of the other; and there is no greater consummation to be wished for in public affairs than that the high and beneficial hopes for the world which he founded upon this should be realized.

We in this country feel deep gratitude to him; we wish that there should be something to commemorate the sympathy and moral support that he gave us in the greatest crisis of our history. We wish his name to be remembered with regard, with honour, and with affection, as that of one who gave us invaluable help at a time when our liberty, our very independence even, seemed to be at stake.

His countrymen who still cherish the names of those who helped the United States years ago in time of trial and peril will find it easy to understand what we here now feel for such men as Walter Hines Page. In all conversations with him I felt—what I am sure many others here, who knew him, also felt—that there was between him and us a peculiarly close tie of personal sympathy. We felt attached to him by a sense of the same values in public life, by a desire for the same sort of world in which to live, by a kinship of thought, of standards, and of ideals. Therefore, while his resting-place is in his own country, which he loved so devotedly, we have wished to have a memorial here to do honour to him and to preserve for those who come after us a record and memory of his life. It is most fitting that the place for this should be Westminster Abbey—where so much that is great, and honourable, and dear in our history is consecrated—this Abbey, which not so very long ago, as time is reckoned in the life of nations, was as much part of the inheritance of his ancestors as of our own. In this spirit I unveil the memorial and ask the Dean to accept it.

Lord Grey then unveiled the tablet, which bears the following inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF
WALTER HINES PAGE
1855–1918

AMBASSADOR
OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA TO THE
COURT OF ST. JAMES'S
1913–1918

The Friend of Britain in Her
Sorest Need.

THE END

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